

THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE

by

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EXT. STREET - DAY

Upper class suburbia. A still, hot morning. Only 7:30, and the heat is already rising from the asphalt in a hazy gas.

A yellow CAT rubs its back against the bark of a pine. It stretches and then moves aimlessly down the block.

Rhythmic SQUEAKS approach. A MAN IN A HOODED SWEAT SHIRT rides by on a rusted bicycle. From beneath his dark hood, the Man looks right and left, his eyes squinting in concentration. He peddles so slowly that the bike seems in constant peril of keeling over.

The cat finds a shady place and lies down. It begins washing its paws. Suddenly, a GROWLING GERMAN SHEPHERD comes bounding out of a yard, teeth bared. The cat SCREAMS and flies from the pavement. The dog is stopped by its leash. It strains against it, BARKING in bloodshot rage.

The squinting Man continues riding, oblivious to the commotion.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

"Good Morning America" on a tiny television screen. The kitchen is homey and untidy. PEARL BARTEL, 29, hums along with the theme song as she counts out spoonfulls of coffee into a filter. An attractive redhead with fair skin and grey eyes, she is six months pregnant and carries it well. Pearl pauses, having lost count. With a shrug, she tosses in another for good measure and fills the kettle at the sink.

Through the window behind the sink, the MAN in the hooded sweatshirt is visible. He rides slowly, slowly by the house, staring at it.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

IVAN "BART" BARTEL, 33, stands at the sink, shirt off, shaving. He is dark, ethnic looking, solid. EMMA BARTEL, 7, stands next to him on a stool, watching intently.

EMMA

Again.

Ivan clears his throat and begins to sing.

BART

I am the Captain of the Pinafore.

EMMA

And a right good Captain too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BART

You're very very good, but be it understood, I command a right good crew.

Ivan gives the razor to Emma, who rinses it like a pro and hands it back to him.

EMMA

We're very very good, but be it understood, he commands a right good crew.

EXT. BARTEL HOUSE - DAY

The hooded Man stops in front of the Bartel house. With extreme precision and care, he climbs off of the bicycle and balances it on its rusty kickstand. Then he reaches into his pocket and pulls out a wrinkled piece of paper.

Concentrating very hard, the Man checks the information on the piece of paper against the address of the Bartel house.

The bicycle sways a moment, then falls over.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Pearl uses a metal fork to dig waffles out of a smoking toaster. She puts the waffles on a plate and heads toward the table, pausing at the fridge to grab the syrup. Pearl puts her load down, grabs a broom, and hits the ceiling with the handle three times. The spot on the ceiling is well worn.

PEARL

Almost ready you guys!

INT: BATHROOM - DAY

Bart's face is beginning to appear behind the lather. He stamps his foot on the floor three times.

BART

Be right down! And father if I may you'll occasionally say, I'm never never sick at sea.

EMMA

What never!?

BART

No, never.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMMA  
What never?!

BART  
Well, hardly ever.

Bart splashes his face with water. Emma is ready with the towel.

EMMA  
He's hardly ever sick at sea...so  
give three cheers and one cheer  
more for the hardy Captain of the  
Pinafore..

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The Man gingerly leans his bicycle against an oak tree. He moves to the front door, hesitates, then raps lightly on the brass knocker.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Pearl bends over a rose bush smelling the blooms. She cuts off four flowers and turns back to the house.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Getting no response, the Man stands back from the door. He peers around the side of the house.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Pearl places the flowers into a vase and sets them on the table. She turns the television off.

PEARL  
(at the ceiling)  
Breakfast! Let's go!

Pearl pours out three orange juices. Over her shoulder, the face of the hooded Man fills the window of the back door. Pearl moves to put the juice away, sees the face, drops the container and SCREAMS.

The hooded Man, terrified by her yell, puts his hands over his ears and SCREAMS.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Bart reacts to the screams, drops the razor and runs.

BART  
(over his shoulder to  
Emma)  
You stay here!!

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Bart appears half dressed at the doorway. Orange juice seeps over the white linoleum floor.

Pearl points at the back door. Bart runs to it and flings it open. Emma peers in from the hallway, afraid.

EMMA  
Mommy?

Pearl runs to her and picks her up, moving backwards, away from the door.

PEARL  
It's okay.. Mommy's okay.

Bart appears at the doorway. He is badly shaken, out of breath, hands on hips. The hooded Man, SOLOMON, stands shyly behind him. He is 39, freckled, and appears slightly retarded.

BART  
Honey, this is the guy that's  
supposed to build our fence. The  
"Better Way Society" sent him.

PEARL  
Oh, of course! You must be Solomon!

SOLOMON  
"Better Day".

BART  
Sorry. Better Day Society.

PEARL  
Do you know I forgot completely!

Pearl puts Emma down and goes to Solomon. She warmly shakes his hand..

PEARL  
Mrs. Peterson has told us all about  
you, Solomon, and we are very happy  
to meet you. I'm Pearl.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pearl pulls Emma up beside her.

PEARL  
And this is Emma.

EMMA  
Hello.

Solomon shakes her hand with great seriousness.

SOLOMON  
Nice to make your acquaintance,  
Emma.

PEARL  
And this is my husband, Bart.

Bart shakes Solomon's hand.

BART  
Hello. Pearl, can I talk to you  
a second?

PEARL  
Of course, darling.  
(over her shoulder)  
Emma, see if our guest would like  
anything to drink.

Pearl and Bart leave the room. Emma turns shyly to Solomon.

EMMA  
My Mom says to ask if you want  
anything.

Solomon thinks a moment.

SOLOMON  
(very serious)  
I would like a new red bicycle.  
With a big basket on the..  
handlebars.

EMMA  
That sounds nice. Um.. do you like  
orange juice?

SOLOMON  
I prefer coffee, if you have some.

EMMA  
Coming right up.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Bart and Pearl speak in whispers.

BART

A fence can be a very complicated thing to build. It has to be level, secure, well planned...

PEARL

So?

BART

So.. I'm not sure it's the most practical idea to have a... mentally handicapped person building us a fence, that's all.

PEARL

Just because Solomon's handicapped doesn't mean he's not entitled to the same opportunities as the rest of us.

BART

(exasperated whisper)

Wouldn't it be easier to just give the guy a couple hundred bucks, hire someone else, and call it a day?

PEARL

Yes, Bart. I suppose that would be much easier.

Beat.

BART

Okay, okay, okay. You win.

Pearl gives him a heart melting smile.

PEARL

That's my man.

Bart smiles despite himself.

EXT. BARTEL HOUSE - DAY

A yellow SCHOOL BUS stops in front of the house. Through steamed windows a blur of chaos is visible. The bus driver sits on the HORN.

INT. BARTEL STAIRWAY - DAY

The sound of a FLUSHING TOILET and Emma comes bounding down the stairs, zipping up her pants. Pearl flies after her, clinging to a glass jar.

PEARL  
What about your jacket?

EMMA  
I got it!

Half-dressed, Bart leans over the bannister and yells after them.

BART  
Remember! The moisture was the control and the temperature was the variable!

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Emma makes a bee-line for the bus and hops on. Pearl appears, breathless, at the front door. She runs for the bus, which is already pulling away.

PEARL  
(holding up the jar)  
Wait!! The mold experiment!!

Pearl runs alongside the bus, which slows to a stop. Emma leans out the window.

PEARL  
Daddy said the moisture was the control and the temperature was the variable.

Pearl passes the jar to Emma's outstretched hands.

EMMA  
Moisture control. Temperature variable. Got it.

Pearl watches the bus pull away.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Bart walks with Solomon alongside a jagged, chain-link fence. He is now dressed in a casual sports jacket.

SOLOMON  
Okay. I see. You want it to end here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BART

Well, no, it should contain the whole area, but the door should be here.

SOLOMON

Door.

BART

Well, yeah. Whatever kind of door or gate that goes with the fence.

SOLOMON

Do you want the fence to keep people out or keep people in?

BART

Well, both. I guess it should mostly keep people out.

SOLOMON

(all smiles)

I see. That's good. Some homes have all the heart.

Bart can't help but smile too.

BART

I guess they do.

Arms spread apart, Solomon begins taking large steps along the fence. He is either measuring distance or doing a strange, ritualistic dance.

BART

Everything okay?

SOLOMON

Right as rain.

Bart walks back towards the house.

BART

Give a yell if you need anything.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Pearl quickly pins up her hair in front of the mirror. Bart enters, gives her a kiss on the back of the neck.

PEARL

Mmmmm. How's it going outside?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BART  
Right as rain.

Pearl suddenly winces and leans against the sink, holding her stomach with her free hand. Bart gently puts his hand on her back.

BART  
Okay?

PEARL  
He's just a real kicker, that's all. Just like his dad.

BART  
You've been running too hard. Have you thought any more about hiring somebody to help out?

PEARL  
I don't know...

BART  
Why not? We've got the money. It would give you time for your greenhouse..

PEARL  
I'll think about it, okay?

Bart pulls her to him.

BART  
You promise?

PEARL  
Cross my heart.

They kiss. Long and sexy.

BART  
I've got to have it, Angel...

Pearl smiles. He kisses her neck.

PEARL  
Mmmm. I didn't know rocket scientists were such good kissers...

BART  
I didn't know pregnant women were so sexy...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Pearl giggles as Bart lowers her onto the bathroom floor.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Solomon digs away at the earth around the old fencing. He pauses to wipe sweat from his brow, squinting up at the house. Solomon smiles.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S WAITING ROOM - DAY

Ultra modern, plush decor. A huge, GURGLING fish tank is set into one wall. All look up as a new patient enters the waiting room, eyes scanning the maternity outfit, the shoes. Pearl sits with "Motherhood" magazine open on her lap.

A NURSE sticks her head in the door.

NURSE  
Bartel?

PEARL  
Yes.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

Pearl stands on a scale. The Nurse, a muscular field hockey coach of a woman, notes a number on her chart.

NURSE  
You've been to see Dr. Mott before.

PEARL  
Once before. The doctor who delivered my first retired, and Dr. Mott was nice enough to take me on mid-term.

The Nurse leads Pearl to a stool. She pumps up a strap around Pearl's arm, preparing to take her blood pressure.

NURSE  
Well I've worked for a few, and he's the best. Expecting his own, you know.

PEARL  
Really? I didn't know that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Nurse deflates the strap and takes it off of Pearl's arm. She writes another figure on the chart.

NURSE

Yup yup yup. You're right up the middle.

Pearl smiles helpfully.

INT. EXAMINING ROOM - DAY

The Nurse shows Pearl into the room. She hands her a white paper gown.

NURSE

Take everything off. Put the gown on open at the back. He won't be long.

PEARL

That's okay.

The Nurse pauses as if to ask another question, then shuts the door. Pearl looks around the room.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Pearl's CHART is carried against a DOCTOR'S PANT LEG as it walks down a hall.

THE DOCTOR'S POV turns and pushes open a door.

INT. EXAMINING ROOM - DAY

Pearl looks up from her magazine. Smiles. She is dressed in the white paper gown.

PEARL

Hello, Dr. Mott.

DR. MOTT is a tall, burly and handsome man in his forties. A full head of blond hair give a youthful, almost frat boy impression. Behind him, the Nurse enters and begins preparing some tools on a white towel.

DR. MOTT

(big smile)

How are we today, Mrs. Bartel?

The Doctor's eyes flit across Pearl's white gown.

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CONTINUED:

PEARL  
Just fine.

DR. MOTT  
That's good. How about feet up?

Pearl scrunches down and places her feet into the stirrups.

PEARL  
He's been kicking up a storm.

DR. MOTT  
Has he now? Let's have a look.  
Maria, hand me a speculum.

The Nurse takes a speculum from the towel and places it into the Doctor's gloved hand. Pearl's face carries a forced, game smile. Her hands rest on her belly. She GRIMACES a bit.

DR. MOTT  
Cold?

PEARL  
A little.

A telephone on the wall makes a small BLIP sound. One of its lines blinks red. The Nurse picks it up.

NURSE  
Yes? (beat) It's Mrs. Miller,  
Doctor. She's calling again for  
the test results.

DR. MOTT  
Why don't you go ahead and give  
them to her, Maria. She's all  
clear. If she has questions, I'll  
call back later.

NURSE  
Yes, Doctor.

Pearl shifts, trying to get comfortable. Her white gown is inadvertantly pulled round, revealing a pale curve of hip.

NURSE  
Please hold.

The Nurse turns to leave the room. Dr. Mott glances over the soft bottom cup of Pearl's breast, just visible. Pearl notices his glance and covers herself up.

DR. MOTT  
Maria.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NURSE

Yes, Doctor?

DR. MOTT

While you're in the lab, would you please call in the results of yesterday's Virupaps?

NURSE

Yes, Doctor.

The Nurse leaves the room. The door closes with a dull THUD. Dr. Mott smiles down at Pearl.

DR. MOTT

Sorry about that.

PEARL

No problem.

DR. MOTT

Try to relax.

We MOVE IN on Pearl's face. She closes her eyes.

DR. MOTT (O.S.)

That's it. That's fine.

Pearl's eyes pop open. She looks at the ceiling, disconcerted. Slowly her eyes move downward, toward the Doctor. Double take.

Pearl's face registers shock. Pearl looks back to the ceiling, frightened. She bites her lip. Her eyes close tightly.

DR. MOTT (O.S.)

That's just fine.

Pearl's hand grips the edge of the table.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Pearl strides quickly past the nurse's station, shoes CLICKING sharply on the tile.

RECEPTIONIST

Mrs. Bartel!

Pearl jumps, turns.

RECEPTIONIST

You forgot to settle your account.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pearl reaches for her checkbook and walks to the counter. Her hair is out of place, her blouse buttoned one button wrong.

PEARL  
How much, please?

RECEPTIONIST  
One hundred and sixty.

Pearl begins to write out a check. Her hands are trembling. The Receptionist checks Pearl's chart.

RECEPTIONIST  
Do you want to schedule your next appointment? Dr. Mott would like to see you again in three weeks.

PEARL  
No. Thank you. I'll call. I'll call and make an appointment when I have my book.

Pearl hands the Receptionist a check and quickly leaves.

INT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Pearl waits on a long line of cars. Her breath comes in rapid, asthmatic WHEEZES. Pearl scrambles through her purse and brings out an INHALER. She inhales from it.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Solomon watches as Pearl's car pulls up in front of the house.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Pearl throws her purse onto the bed. She sits down a moment, then picks up the telephone and dials a number.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

A purple smudged PETRIE DISH held up to the light. Bart, wearing a lab jacket, squints up at it. A TECHNICIAN calls out from a nearby incubator.

TECH  
Dr. Bartel. Think we've got something on the Kayyem broth plate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BART  
(big smile)  
I knew it.

Bart quickly approaches the Technician. He takes an orange-colored plate and holds it up to the light. A FEMALE GRADUATE STUDENT approaches.

STUDENT  
Phone call for you, Dr. Bartel.  
I think it's your wife.

Bart reluctantly puts the orange petrie dish down.

BART  
Be right back. Keep them warm!

INT. BART'S OFFICE - DAY

Large. Impressive. A glass wall separates it from the rest of the lab. Bart is obviously the boss of this operation. He picks up the phone.

INTERCUT BART AND PEARL

BART  
Hi, honey. It's a real bad time.  
Everything alright?

PEARL  
Fine. I guess. I just wanted to  
hear your voice.

BART  
Okay if we talk later? I'm smack  
in the middle of something.

PEARL  
Yes. Sure. Bart?

BART  
I'm here.

PEARL  
I love you.

BART  
I love you too, Angel.

Pearl hangs up the phone. She sits a moment, staring into space.

INT. LAB - DAY

Bart examines the orange dish against the light.

BART  
It's a strong colony alright. Good work. Now let's throw these guys onto an ampicillin plate. Get a tolerance test.

TECH  
Want me to run a tetracycline while I'm at it?

Bart doesn't respond immediately. His mind is elsewhere...

BART  
Why not. Call me if you need me. I'll be in my office.

INT. BARTEL SHOWER - DAY

Steam everywhere. The phone RINGS, but cannot be heard inside the shower. Pearl leans her head back and closes her eyes. She starts to cry in big, body shaking sobs.

INT. BART'S OFFICE - DAY

Bart listens on the phone. No answer. He hangs up, puzzled.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Pearl stands in front of the icebox and stares into it. Her hair is still wet from the shower.

SOLOMON (O.S.)  
I am approaching the back door.  
I am now very near the back door.  
I am now going to knock on the back door.

There is a KNOCK on the door. Pearl smiles despite herself. She opens the door.

PEARL  
It isn't necessary to warn me before you knock, Solomon.

Solomon regards her a moment, concerned.

SOLOMON  
The sunshine is gone from your face, Pearl.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL  
 (weak smile)  
 Oh. Probably just hiding behind  
 a cloud.

She shivers. Solomon closes the back door.

SOLOMON  
 Some chills go right to the bone.

EXT. BARTEL HOUSE - NIGHT

The windows burn yellow. A high WIND HOWLS.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Pearl puts paste on two toothbrushes. She places one on the sink and brushes aimlessly with the other. Bart picks it up.

BART  
 The really exciting part is that  
 these bacteria are hardy as hell,  
 but we can knock them to kingdom  
 come with just a little antibiotic.  
 The EPA's gonna love us.

Bart watches Pearl's reflection in the mirror. He stops.

BART  
 Are you alright?

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pearl breathes deeply from an inhaler. She is sitting on the bed, her feet pulled up beneath her. Bart paces back and forth across the room.

BART  
 Let me get this straight. He has  
 you up in the.. the uh, stirrups,  
 and he's feeling around, and then  
 you notice he's sporting a hard  
 on?

PEARL  
 Yes, but they're SUPPOSED to feel  
 around. That's what's so  
 confusing. It's the WAY he was  
 feeling around, and then his voice.  
 It felt... provocative.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BART  
Provocative, huh. I'm going to  
KILL this guy...

PEARL  
Bart, you promised to stay calm!

BART  
(deep breath)  
Okay, baby. Okay. I'm calm.

Pearl hugs her knees to her chest.

PEARL  
I just can't believe..he has a  
pregnant wife.

Bart goes to Pearl and holds her. Long beat.

BART  
Honey, I know this is going to be  
hard, but tomorrow we have to call  
the Police and file a report. I'll  
be right next to you the whole  
time.

PEARL  
Do we have to involve the Police?

BART  
Pearl, you owe it to yourself to  
get this guy. If we don't say  
something, he's just going to keep  
on doing what he's doing.

PEARL  
What do I tell the Police when they  
ask why I didn't do anything?

BART  
What do you mean?

PEARL  
Why I didn't stand up to him, or  
run, or scream?

BART  
Because... you were scared, that's  
all.

## INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darkness. A shot glass and a bottle of Scotch on the night table. Pearl is fast asleep, her breathing deep, her arms wrapped around a pillow. Bart stands at the window watching her, his face lit by the moon. He turns and stares outside into the yard. Half of the old metal fence is torn down.

## EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

LONG SHOT. Pearl and Bart walk down the endless front steps. Pearl is unsteady on her feet. Bart helps her walk, holding tightly to her elbow. They both appear very small.

## INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Pearl places chinese food containers, napkins, and paper plates on television trays. Behind her, Bart and Emma rough house on the floor.

The News plays on a television set. Pearl watches intently even as she takes the plates to the table.

## NEWSCASTER

Since the initial accusations against the Beverly Hills Doctor, four more women have come forward with similar charges. Dr. Mott was unavailable for comment, but his Attorney stated they will seek damages for slander.

A COMMERCIAL FOR SUNTAN LOTION comes on the television. Bart has looked up from the floor where he wrestles with Emma. He walks to Pearl and hugs her tightly.

## BART

I love your Mommy very much, Emma.

Emma jumps up and runs to her parents. She puts her arms around them both. The three of them stand together in embrace.

## INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The room is dark, lit blue by a large goldfish tank. Medical journals and diplomas adorn the walls. We travel smoothly across a mahogany desk. A HAND picks up a silver framed picture of Dr. Mott with a beautiful WOMAN dressed in an evening gown. They smile for the camera.

## DR. MOTT (O.S.)

Everything I worked for. It's gone...all of it...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dr. Mott looks older, and very tired. He turns his gaze onto a DARK FIGURE seated opposite him.

MOTT

Don't you give me that look. I gave you everything you wanted, didn't I? White picket fence, a respectable address, a baby on the way. You were Queen for a day. And I was the King.

Mott brings out a GUN. He points it at the FIGURE seated across from him. The figure stands. It is the WOMAN FROM THE SILVER FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH.

PEYTON MOTT is tall, striking, and very pregnant. Long hair so black it appears blue. Eyes like beautiful black stones. Peyton looks down the barrel of the gun. She does not flinch.

Mott quickly turns the gun away from her and puts it to his own head. Peyton's eyes widen....A GUNSHOT rings out. BLOOD SPLATTERS Peyton's smiling face in the silver framed photograph.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

A spinning RED LIGHT and under it a sign reading: "EXPRESS PAY: CASH ONLY". Pearl gets on line with her cart at the check out counter. She takes from it a box of detergent, and reads the back of it while she waits. Two WOMEN stand on line in front of her.

WOMAN #1 (O.S.)

Look at this. A deranged Doctor from Cedar's?

Pearl reacts and looks up. The Woman is gesturing to a TABLOID, but Pearl cannot see the front page....

WOMAN #2 (O.S.)

Oh, yeah. Read about it this morning. High class gyno was molesting pregnant women, got caught, and blew his brains out all over his pregnant wife. Boom.

WOMAN #1

Just like that.

In SLOW MOTION, Pearl's detergent box drops to the floor and splits open. Blue powder flies across the aisle.

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY

Wood panelling. Law books. Maroon leather. A thin, greying LAWYER wearing bifocals sits behind a desk perusing a document. He takes the glasses off and faces Peyton, who sits in the chair opposite him.

LAWYER

The suicide provision is quite clear, although we may be able to get the Insurance Company to return a small lump settlement.

No response. Peyton's red manicured hands wring themselves, twisting the pinky finger in rhythmic nervousness. The Lawyer clears his throat. This is difficult for him.

LAWYER

As you know, although your husband had sizable assets, they have been frozen by the State. This is normal procedure when it is probable that the estate will be sued by a number of sources. We will of course appeal the action, but.. I suggest you begin making some alternate plans for yourself..

Peyton's pinky finger back and forth. White knuckles showing.

LAWYER

Mrs. Mott, I am very sorry.

PEYTON

So... there's nothing?

LAWYER

We'll do all we can--

The pinky finger SNAPS. It points out at a strange angle.

LAWYER

My God..

Peyton stands abruptly. She sways a moment, grabbing the back of her chair for support with one hand and holding her belly with the other.

PEYTON

Excuse me..

Peyton walks unsteadily toward the door. Then her eyes roll up into her head.

Peyton COLLAPSES onto the thick brown carpet.

INT. DININGROOM - NIGHT

Emma and Bart sit at the table, surrounded by cartons of leftover chinese food. Bart opens them one by one, sniffing and overreacting for Emma's benefit.

EMMA

Pass the spare ribs.

Bart obliges. Emma peers into the bag.

EMMA

There's only one left.

BART

It's got your name on it.

Emma dips the rib in duck sauce and takes a greasy bite.

EMMA

Is Mommy going to be okay?

BART

She's okay now. She's just resting.

EMMA

Is it my fault?

BART

No, it is not your fault. It's about different things. Not you.

EMMA

Is it the baby's fault?

BART

Sweetheart, it's nobody's fault. Sometimes Mommies need to rest, that's all. Do you understand?

EMMA

I guess.

BART

Now, let's talk mold. I hear your experiment was a big hit.

EMMA

Oh, yeah! Mrs. Henry says it was the best in the class!

BART

That's my girl!

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Steam rises from a bathtub full of hot water. Pearl sinks with deep relief into the bath.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Fluorescent lights fly by on the ceiling. Four masked attendants push a guerny rapidly down the hallway. The FIGURE on the guerny is Peyton. Holding her belly.

NURSE

She's going to need blood!

The guerny wheels around a corner.

PEYTON

(a whisper)

My baby.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Pearl stands at the sink, wrapped in a clean white teri cloth robe. She rubs a cream into her face. Abruptly she stops, puts down the jar. Pearl looks down and puts both her hands onto her stomach. Smiling, she closes her eyes and lets the feeling of her internal activity run through her.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY CARE UNIT - NIGHT

BLOOD covers a white sheet. A TEAM of DOCTORS and NURSES stand over Peyton. Another NURSE TEAM stands around a small table off to the side working on a SMALL, LIFELESS BUNDLE.

DOCTOR

We'll need a transfusion unit!

The Nurse team works frantically around the tiny bundle.

NURSE

We're losing him!

Peyton's body tenses and jumps, nearly falling off the table.

PEYTON

NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

Her SCREAMS ECHO down endless hospital corridors.

INT: HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

On a small television screen, Pearl stands in the back yard, backing away from a REPORTER.

REPORTER  
Mrs. Bartel, in light of recent developments, are you still planning a civil suit?

PEARL  
I...

Bart runs up and puts his arm around Pearl.

BART  
Don't you Goddamn guys ever quit?!

REPORTER  
Mr. Bartel, your wife--

BART  
Look. If I make a statement, will you leave us alone?

THE SCREEN GOES DEAD.

REVEAL that we are in a HOSPITAL ROOM, the television set suspended from the ceiling. A NURSE has turned it off and stands beneath it, holding a chart.

NURSE  
(sing song)  
Time for your medication.

Peyton sits in a hospital bed. Her lips are badly chapped and her eyes seem sunken. She slowly diverts her gaze from the blank screen and onto the Nurse.

PEYTON  
Please turn it back on.

NURSE  
It is for your own good, Mrs. Mott, that we maintain a strict schedule.

Peyton's eyes never waver from the Nurse's. She lets the look sink in a good beat.

PEYTON  
Be a sport.

Beat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NURSE  
Well, alright then. But I'll be  
back in exactly ten minutes.

The Nurse turns the TELEVISION ON and leaves.

On the screen, The Reporter stands in front of the Bartel house as Bart ushers a shaken Pearl inside. The VIDEO LENS ZOOMS IN for a lurid last glimpse at Pearl's devastated face as she looks over her shoulder.

Peyton's gaze is riveted to the screen.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BARTEL HOUSE - DAY

A beautiful, clear day. The PICKET FENCE has been completed and is painted a bright white. In the background, and growing louder, the sound of rhythmic SQUEAKING.

INT. BARTEL KITCHEN - DAY

Pearl gently rocks a small carriage with her foot as she pours out three orange juices. She is no longer pregnant and her face looks bright and rested. Pearl puts the juices on the table, grabs a broom, and KNOCKS it three times on the ceiling. She gets three POUNDS back.

Pearl sets the table. Solomon enters. Performing comfortable routine, he pours himself a cup of coffee. Pearl wordlessly hands him the milk. Solomon adds it to his coffee and exits. Emma and Bart run loudly down the stairs. The BABY CRIES. Pearl picks JOE up and walks him around the kitchen. He is three months old.

EMMA  
Oooops. Sorry Mom.

BART  
Sorry Mom.

Bart and Emma sit down at the table. Pearl walks around the kitchen, soothing Joe with small bounces. Bart stands.

BART  
Here. Let me help.

PEARL  
No. You eat up.

Bart sits and begins to eat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BART  
Any Nanny interviews on the horizon?

PEARL  
One today. But I'm about ready to give up.

BART  
No way. We have a deal.

PEARL  
Bart, I've seen maybe thirty people. No one feels right.

EMMA  
What about Solomon? He could be our Nanny.

PEARL  
Mmmm. I don't know if he'd make such a good Nanny.

EMMA  
Then what's going to happen when Solomon finishes painting the fence? Where will he go?

Pearl and Emma both look up to see what Bart will say. Beat.

BART  
I guess we'll have to find something else for him to do.

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

Pearl and Emma wait for the school bus.

EMMA  
Mom. I don't feel well.

PEARL  
Go on to the bathroom and I'll hold the bus.

EMMA  
It's not that. It's my head.

Pearl feels her forehead. Then she kneels on the ground in front of Emma.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL

Emma. Is something worrying you  
about school today?

Emma hesitates. Then her words spill out quickly.

EMMA

A kid named Roth made me get in  
the shed during play time. He said  
if he ever saw my face again I'd  
be deat meat.

PEARL

Did you talk to Mrs. Henry?

Emma looks at the ground and nods.

PEARL

Tell you what. I'll pick you up  
from school today and have a talk  
with Roth.

EMMA

. Dad's meaner than you are.

PEARL

I promise I'll be mean.

The school bus pulls up. Pearl gives Emma a kiss.

EMMA

Mom, I gotta go!

Pearl watches as Emma is swallowed up by the bus. It pulls  
away... REVEALING, impossibly and suddenly close to where Pearl  
stands.....

PEYTON. Pearl jumps.

Peyton's hair is cut short under a hat. She wears a plain dress,  
sneakers, no makeup or jewelry. She looks altogether different.

PEYTON

I'm here for the Nanny position.  
We spoke last week?

PEARL

Yes, of course. I'm Pearl Bartel.

She walks to Peyton and shakes her hand.

PEYTON

Peyton Flanders.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PEARL  
Please come inside.

Pearl and Peyton enter the house.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD BATHROOMS - DAY

Sound of a toilet FLUSHING. Emma emerges from the girl's room adjusting her pants.

VOICE (O.S.)  
I thought I told you I didn't want  
to ever see your face again.

Emma spins around. ROTH, a pudgy seven year old, stands a few feet off, hands on hips. Emma backs away.

EMMA  
Mrs. Henry will be calling everyone  
in soon.

ROTH  
Wait, Emma! Don't move!

Emma freezes.

ROTH  
There's a bee on your head!

EMMA  
A bee?

ROTH  
Better stay stone still. A bee  
sting could kill you.

EMMA  
(panic creeping in)  
What am I going to do?

ROTH  
I'll go get the teacher. But don't  
move, now, no matter what.

Roth runs off.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD ENTRANCE - DAY

A line of children files back into the school building. Mrs. Henry stands in the doorway. Last on line, walking very slowly, is Roth. Big smile on his face.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD BATHROOMS - DAY

Emma stands frozen in the same position, watching through the trees as Mrs. Henry walks inside the building and shuts the door behind her. Emma bites her trembling lip, careful not to move her head.

INT. BARTEL KITCHEN - DAY

A LONG SHINY KNIFE on the countertop. Next to it, a sliced lemon. Pearl and Peyton sit in the breakfast nook, two finished cups of tea in front of them. They are at ease, flushed with good conversation.

PEARL  
That's fascinating. Then you've been in child care a long time.

PEYTON  
Since I lost my baby. The doctors told me that I can't have any more of my own, so....

PEARL  
How terrible... I'm sorry.

Beat. Peyton looks at her watch.

PEYTON  
It's late! I should be going.

PEARL  
Is it eleven already?! What ever happened to the time?

PEYTON  
You know what they say: it flies when you're having fun.

PEARL  
You know, I can't remember the last time I met someone and felt so... comfortable so quickly..

PEYTON  
Yes. Well, I'll give you some time to think all this over, speak with your husband...

Peyton stands. Pearl follows suit.

PEARL  
Certainly.

Referring to a thick envelope on the tabletop.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEYTON  
And I'll leave my references here  
with you, Mrs. Bartel.

PEARL  
Please, call me Pearl.

EXT. FRONT DRIVEWAY - DAY

Pearl walks Peyton out to the street.

PEARL  
I'm sorry you didn't get to meet  
Joe. If he doesn't sleep now, he's  
cranky the rest of the day.

PEYTON  
I'm sorry too.

PEARL  
When would you be able to start?

PEYTON  
Soon.

Beat.

PEARL  
Soon. Wonderful.

Peyton holds out her hand. Pearl shakes it.

PEARL  
Your number is on the resume?

PEYTON  
Actually, I'd rather call you if  
that's alright.

SOLOMON (O.S.)  
I'm ready to show you the trim,  
Pearl! The name of it is cape cod  
blue.

Solomon approaches. He is covered in blue paint.

PEYTON  
Are you having your house painted?

PEARL  
Yes, sort of. Very slowly.  
Solomon, this is Peyton. Solomon  
is from the "Better Day Society".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLOMON

Hello.

PEYTON

Hello. Nice to meet you.

Solomon shakes Peyton's hand, getting blue paint on her hand and shirt cuff.

PEARL

Solomon!

SOLOMON

I'm sorry.

Peyton smiles tightly. She brushes at her sleeve.

PEYTON

That's alright.

Something about Peyton's smile makes Solomon stop and look at her in fear. He backs away.

SOLOMON

I...I.. I should go.

Solomon turns and quickly walks away.

PEARL

Sorry about that! Should we put something on your sleeve...

PEYTON

It's quite alright. I'll call tomorrow.

Peyton turns and walks away.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Peyton walks briskly to a silver Mercedes parked around the corner, a "FOR SALE" sign in its window. As she walks, she RIPS her dirtied SLEEVE off at the armpit.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

End of day chaos. Kids jumping into cars, scampering onto schoolbuses. Emma stands near the curb with a friend, DIANE, silently playing "cat's cradle". Diane looks over Emma's shoulder. Her eyes get big.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIANE  
It's Roth.

Emma spins. Roth is upon her.

ROTH  
Thought I told you to get lost.

EMMA  
I'm sorry, Roth..

ROTH  
Girl, you're pushing me.

PEARL (O.S.)  
Emma?

EMMA  
Mom!

Pearl has pulled up beside the curb. She gets out of the car and walks around to the children.

PEARL  
Hello, Diane!

DIANE  
Hello, Mrs. Bartel.

Pearl turns to Roth.

PEARL  
I'm Emma's mother. What's your name?

Roth squints his eyes and doesn't say a word. Emma and Diane look, terrified, from him to Pearl.

PEARL  
Emma, is this the young man who's been threatening you?

Roth glares at Emma. She looks helplessly at Pearl.

PEARL  
That's okay. You can say.

No response from Emma. Pearl turns to Roth.

PEARL  
It's not nice to bother people smaller than you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EMMA  
Let's go, Mom.

Pearl hesitates.

EMMA  
Mom! Let's go!

Reluctantly, Pearl turns back to the car. Emma and Diane follow.

PEARL (O.S.)  
Are we driving you home, Diane?

Emma looks back over her shoulder. Roth whispers "Dead Meat".

DIANE (O.S.)  
Yes, thank you, Mrs. Bartel.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Emma runs upstairs. Pearl enters, puts down her purse, and notices PEYTON'S HAT left on the table. She picks it up, turns it over in her hands. She walks to a hallway mirror and puts it on. Perfect fit. Pearl looks at her reflection, turning her face right and left.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BARTEL HOUSE - DAY

Careful strokes of cape cod blue on the molding of a window. Solomon concentrates on keeping paint off of the pane. Sound of approaching FOOTSTEPS. Solomon turns. He is high on a ladder near the front door.

HIGH ANGLE ON PEYTON.

She walks to the door carrying a small suitcase and a box. She reaches out to ring the doorbell. Then she senses that she's being watched, and the hand pauses midair.

Slowly Peyton looks up into Solomon's face. She gives him a broad smile and then RINGS the doorbell. Pearl answers and brings her inside.

Solomon leans down and peers through the window. Inside, MOS, Peyton puts down her suitcase and gives Pearl THE BOX. Pearl opens it and thanks Peyton.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pearl walks outside. She hangs a PINK, ROOSTER SHAPED, WIND CHIME from a nail on the eave of the house and stands back to look at it. Swayed by a slight breeze, its little HEART SHAPED BELLS make music.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A dinner reeling out of control. Pearl frantically chops onions, pausing to check the steaming pots and her cookbook. Emma stands on a chair stirring something. Peyton washes lettuce. Joe gurgles in a basinet nearby.

EMMA

But why don't you have a place to live of your own?

PEARL

Emma, don't ask rude questions.

PEYTON

That's okay. It's because I don't have a family of my own, Emma, and being a Nanny, I get to join in another family.

Pearl pauses chopping.

PEARL

And we're glad to have you with us, aren't we, Emma?

EMMA

Yes.

PEYTON

What are you making there?

EMMA

We're having spaghetti. I'm in charge of stirring the sauce.

PEARL

Why don't you be in charge of setting the table? We're almost ready, and Daddy will be home any minute....

Emma sets to work.

PEYTON

If you don't mind me asking, what does Mr. Bartel do for a living?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMMA  
Daddy's a rocket scientist.

PEARL  
Bart's a genetic engineer. Right  
now Dupont's paying him to seed  
clouds.

PEYTON  
Seed clouds?

EMMA  
For rain.

Sound of a DOOR OPENING. Emma runs.

EMMA  
It's Daddy!

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Bart gives Emma a hug. Pearl enters.

BART  
Sorry I'm late-

PEARL  
You're right on time.

She gives Bart a kiss.

PEARL  
Bart, I want you to meet Peyton.

PEYTON (O.S.)  
Hello.

Peyton stands in the doorway, smiling. Bart's eyes lock with hers for a small moment. He registers surprise at her beauty.

PEARL  
I'm needed in the kitchen. Go get  
washed up!

Pearl leaves the room.

BART  
Very nice to meet you, Peyton.

Bart walks to Peyton and reaches to shake her hand. She's holding a fork in her right hand, so she gamely offers her left. An awkward beat. Emma tugs at his sleeve.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMMA

Dad! You have to hurry! Dinner's almost ready.

BART

My goodness, we're bossy tonight.

Bart backs out of the room.

INT. KITCHEN/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

"Pirates of Penzance" blares loudly from the stereo. Emma and Bart help clear the table. Peyton walks back and forth, gently bouncing the baby in her arms. Pearl rinses a plate and puts it into the dishwasher.

PEYTON

So, what are you going to do with the greenhouse when it's finished?

PEARL

I want to experiment with some rare flowers, maybe some produce. A greenhouse will give me control over the environment.

PEYTON

You could always have Bart seed the clouds above the house.

Pearl laughs.

EMMA

(proudly to Peyton)

I'm in charge of strawberries.

PEYTON

Are the tools you're using dangerous?

PEARL

Not if you're careful.

Bart enters, kisses Pearl, and puts a dirty bowl on the counter.

BART

Delicious dinner.

PEARL

You're too kind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMMA  
Can we do the model airplane now  
Daddy?

BART  
Sure. Get it out.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bart sits on the floor with a model airplane kit spread out all over the floor. Emma sits next to him, looking dejected. Peyton stands behind them both, rocking the baby as she stares down at the project.

Pearl is stretched out on the couch, taking notes from a CARPENTRY BOOK. She studies a picture of a STUD DRIVER. Bart throws a plastic piece onto the floor.

BART  
Forty bucks and the whole kit's  
worthless. I just hate being  
ripped off..

Pearl sits up, puts her book aside.

PEARL  
Did you recheck the box?

BART  
It's not there.  
(to Emma)  
I'm sorry sweetheart. I just can't  
fix it without the piece.

Emma gives a big sigh, her cheeks resting in both hands.

PEARL  
Well don't look so glum, you two!  
I'm sure we can send away for the  
missing piece.

Peyton sits down with the baby, silently watching, watching..

PEARL  
Hey, Emma, you know what? A special  
box came today in the mail. You  
want to open it?

Emma's face lights up. She runs to the foyer.

BART  
From Dupont?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL

Think so.

Emma returns, tearing at the box as she walks. She lifts a CRYSTAL PAPERWEIGHT out of white tissue paper.

EMMA

Wow!...What is it?

PEARL

Hard to tell.

PEYTON

Isn't it a paperweight?

BART

I think it is a paperweight.

Pearl takes the paperweight from Emma and walks to the fireplace, placing it on the mantle. She stands back so that everyone can see it. Beat. Bart wrinkles his nose.

PEYTON

(off Bart's reaction)

Don't you think it should go on the coffee table, so people can see it better?

Bart puts the paperweight on the coffee table. Another pause as everyone sizes it up.

EMMA

It looks good there, don't you think, Mommy?

PEARL

It's the perfect place.

INT. NURSERY - NIGHT

Pearl leans over the baby's crib. He is sound asleep. Pearl stares with love at the tiny face. She covers him with a blanket.

INT. EMMA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Emma lies quietly in bed, hugging a large BABY DOLL. Pearl sits over her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL  
 (softly singing)  
 Beautiful beautiful brown eyes,  
 beautiful beautiful brown eyes,  
 beautiful beautiful brown eyes,  
 I'll never love blue eyes again.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bart sits up in bed, writing on a notepad, deep in concentration. Pearl enters in a nightgown.

PEARL  
 So, what do you think?

Bart looks up.

BART  
 About Peyton? She's perfect. Even better than you described. You did a great job, honey.

Pearl gets into bed.

PEARL  
 Did I tell you she's from Las Vegas? I didn't know people had babies in Las Vegas.

No response. Bart is lost in concentration again. Pearl nuzzles up against him. He smiles.

BART  
 Angel, you know this EPA proposal's due next week...

She kissès his shoulder, then his ear. He's giving in...

BART  
 It's not fair to take advantage of a weak man...

PEARL  
 (whisper)  
 How much time you need?

He glances at the clock.

BART  
 Can you hold on until 11:30?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL  
We could throw caution to the wind  
and do it at 11:17...

Pearl turns off her light and curls up against him. He turns back to his writing... lots of equations and data results.

The clock hits 11:25. Bart rubs his eyes, puts down his work. He turns to Pearl, kisses her cheeks, her lips... Fast asleep, she GROANS and turns over. Bart turns his light off with a sigh and falls into exhausted sleep.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

A door opens. Bare feet appear on the shiny hardwood floor.

INT. NURSERY - NIGHT

Peyton's dark form enters the baby's room. She closes the door and approaches the crib. Peyton lifts Joe and walks to a rocking chair. She sits, rocking back and forth, holding him tight.

Peyton takes her breast from under her nightgown and puts it to Joe's mouth. The child sucks on it. Peyton lets her head fall back with a deep sigh.

Moonlight streams through the window.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. YARD - DAY

In the background, sound of SOLOMON'S JIG SAW RIPPING THROUGH WOOD. CLOSE ON the bubble of a leveler, tilting back and forth. Pearl and Emma concentrate on leveling two stakes set into the ground. Emma's eyes are glued to the bubble.

EMMA  
The bubble is off.

Pearl takes a MALLET and clumsily hits the left-side stake. Emma jumps in again and checks the bubble.

EMMA  
Still off! Half a bubble.

Solomon steps in. He gently takes the mallet from Pearl.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLOMON  
I've been told I'm half a bubble  
off.

The mallet strikes a blow.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Bart stands at the front door.

BART  
Pearl! They're waiting outside!

Bart glances at his watch. There is a KNOCK at the door. Bart opens it. A tall, blonde MAN, impeccably dressed, enters. This is MARTY CRAVEN, late thirties.

MARTY  
Mind if I take a leak?

BART  
Sure, sure. Does Marlene want to  
come inside?

MARTY  
Nah. She's on the phone.

Peyton enters from the kitchen. Marty stops in his tracks.

BART  
Uh, Marty, this is Peyton. She's  
our new live in Nanny.

Marty takes her in with his eyes. He offers a salacious hand. Peyton coolly shakes it.

MARTY  
Very pleased to meet you Peyton.

PEYTON  
Pleasure's mine, Marty. Pearl  
needs me upstairs.

Peyton walks upstairs. Marty watches her behind.

MARTY  
Are you kidding me?

BART  
What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTY  
You know what! How do you sleep at  
night?

A loud KNOCK at the door. Bart opens it. MARLENE CRAVEN steps  
in. 33, extremely well put together, painfully thin. She gives  
Bart a kiss.

MARLENE  
(Brooklyn and gravel)  
Just wanted to inform everyone that  
this place will not, I repeat not,  
hold our table...

She stops suddenly, sniffs, eyes her husband suspiciously.

MARLENE  
What's with you?

MARTY  
What do you mean, what's with me?  
Nothing's with me!

Pearl appears at the top of the stairs, and behind her, PEYTON,  
carrying the baby. Marlene looks Peyton over.

MARLENE  
(under her breath)  
Nothing my ass.

Pearl hurries down the stairs.

PEARL  
Sorry, sorry! I'm ready.  
(to Peyton)  
We're at the Emerald City Cafe if  
you need anything..

PEYTON  
Everything will be FINE here. Go.  
Have fun.

Marlene steps forward. Smooth smile.

MARLENE  
You must be Peyton. Marlene  
Craven.

PEYTON  
Hello.

PEARL  
How rude of me!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Marlene approaches Peyton and Joe.

MARLENE  
 (stroking Joe's head)  
 Will someone please look at this  
 beautiful fucking kid?

A beat. Marlene looks up into Peyton's eyes. Smiles.

MARLENE  
 Poison.

PEYTON  
 Uh.. excuse me?

MARLENE  
 You're wearing the perfume  
 "Poison".

Peyton's hand goes to her neck.

MARLENE  
 I can smell it.  
 (to Marty)  
 I thought you had to take a leak!

MARTY  
 I'll go at the restaurant!

As they file out the door, Marlene catches sight of the ROOSTER  
 WIND CHIME.

MARLENE  
 Is that where all the annoying  
 noise is coming from?

PEARL  
 (elbowing ribs)  
 That's a gift from Peyton.

MARLENE  
 Charming.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Bart and Marty pile into the car. Marlene pulls Pearl aside.

MARLENE  
 (quick whisper)  
 Pearl, haven't I taught you  
 anything? You never, NEVER, let a  
 beautiful woman take a power  
 position in your own home.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL  
Power position?

MARLENE  
Listen to me -

PEARL  
Marlene, you've got to have a  
little more faith in people.

MARTY  
(out the window)  
Hello?! Remember us?

MARLENE  
Keep your pants on!  
(back to Pearl)  
Hear me. Don't you take your eyes  
off of her for a moment.

Marlene puts her arm around Pearl and they walk to the car.  
Behind them, in the foyer window, is PEYTON'S WATCHING FACE..

MARLENE (O.S.)  
Love the outfit, Pearl! Bart, what  
you've got is a Shiksa Goddess,  
nothing less.....

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Emma turns on the television and runs to the couch, sitting down  
next to Peyton. "Twin Peaks" comes on the screen. Peyton hands  
Emma a bowl of popcorn.

EMMA  
This is great! Mom never lets me  
watch this show.

PEYTON  
That's why we have to keep it a  
secret.

Peyton puts her arm around Emma.

PEYTON  
Do you know what a secret is?

EMMA  
Yes. It's something you can't tell  
anybody, no matter what.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEYTON  
That's right. And now we have our  
own secret club.

EMMA  
I'm so glad you came to stay with  
us, Peyton.

Emma leans against Peyton, who kisses the top of her head.

PEYTON  
Me too, Emma, me too.

INT. EMERALD CITY CAFE - NIGHT

Green. Hip crowd. Bart and Pearl sit at a booth with the  
Cravens. Marlene smokes, tipping her ashes onto a finished  
dinner plate.

MARLENE  
So I told them, stay home, for  
Christ's sakes. I mean, if they're  
concerned about price they can't  
afford to do business with me  
anyway.

Marlene blows smoke expertly out the side of her mouth.

MARTY  
Marlene's cleaning up on the high  
end stuff.

Bart leans forward and grabs Marlene's pack of cigarettes.

BART  
Mind if I bum one?

PEARL  
You're a horrible influence,  
Marlene. He never smokes anymore  
except with you.

Bart lights up and takes a deep drag with obvious relish.

BART  
One once in a while isn't going  
to kill me.

MARLENE  
Don't kid a kidder.  
(to Pearl)  
So what's up with your shed?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL  
You know very well it's a  
greenhouse. I started laying the  
foundation this week.

MARLENE  
Maybe I'm slow, but I don't get  
why that retard doesn't build the  
thing for you..

PEARL  
Solomon is not retarded. And I want  
to try to build it myself. That's  
the whole point.

BART  
No use Marlene. God knows I've  
tried. She's a stubborn bull.

PEARL  
In your china shop, I suppose?

MARLENE  
Touche, doll. Touche.

BART  
We can't win, can we Marty?

A WAITER begins to collect the dirty plates.

MARTY  
How does the saying go, "The hand  
that rocks the cradle is the hand  
that rules the world"?

MARLENE  
What about, "The hand that rocks  
the cradle is the hand that cradles  
the rock."

Marlene looks at Pearl significantly. She stubs out her  
cigarette.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Pearl puts on a pair of clip-on earrings. Peyton appears behind  
her.

PEARL  
Almost ready... ouch. I'll be able  
to keep these on for about three  
minutes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEYTON  
Clip-ons?

Pearl nods and gestures to her jewelry box.

PEARL  
I've got a ton of stuff that I  
don't know what to do with. Bart  
has great taste, but I'm just not  
a jewelry person.

Peyton holds up a delicate GARNET BRACELET and looks at it  
against the light.

PEYTON  
This is beautiful..

PEARL  
It's from Florence. You can wear  
it if you want.

Peyton puts it back into the box. Pause.

PEYTON  
It was nice meeting your friend  
last night.

PEARL  
Marlene? She's a character alright.

PEYTON  
Have you been friends long?

PEARL  
Bart grew up with her. She's  
actually an old girlfriend of his.

PEYTON  
Oh really?

PEARL  
(a bit too quickly)  
Of course that was forever ago.  
High school. Is the baby ready?

PEYTON  
Ready and raring to go.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Peyton, Pearl and Joe walk to the front door. Pearl picks up  
a THICK ENVELOPE from the foyer table and tucks it securely into  
her purse. Peyton fits tiny shoes onto Joe's feet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL  
We have to stop at the post office  
for Bart.

PEYTON  
Is that the paper he's been working  
on?

PEARL  
Yeah. It's a proposal for the EPA.  
It's got to be in Washington by  
tomorrow.

PEYTON  
Sounds like a big deal.

PEARL  
It is. It could mean that Bart's  
work would be tested out on the  
environment...

PEYTON  
No kidding...

EXT. MALL - DAY

Pearl and Peyton walk along the mall, chatting and enjoying each other. Peyton pushes Joe in his stroller. Pearl carries two shopping bags.

PEARL  
So then you started dating?

PEYTON  
I sort of married him right away.  
He was very rich and I had nothing.  
We had some good years. He taught  
me a lot. Everything I know,  
really.

PEARL  
Why'd you divorce?

PEYTON  
He died.

PEARL  
My God. I'm so sorry... How did  
he die?

Beat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEYTON  
He was murdered.

PEARL  
Murdered? Did they ever catch who did it?

PEYTON  
No. But I believe that what goes around comes around.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Pearl and Peyton eat lunch, surrounded by shopping bags. Joe sits in a baby chair.

PEARL  
I suppose my problem is that my passions aren't "career oriented", you know what I mean?

PEYTON  
So they aren't "high powered" enough to be respectable.

PEARL  
Exactly.

PEYTON  
These days, you're a failure if you're not a super mother, super career woman, super wife. "She earns a hundred grand a year, but she still finds time for blow jobs, muscle tone and homemade lasagna."

Pearl laughs.

PEARL  
I really don't believe it's humanly possible to do EVERYTHING well. Marlene makes six figures a year but she's given up children.

PEYTON  
I guess glamorous women do give something up to get there.

PEARL  
Marlene is glamorous, isn't she?  
(Beat) I hardly ever feel glamorous anymore.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL (Cont'd)

I've never told anyone this, but sometimes I do get a little jealous of what Marlene has...

PEYTON

I'm sure Bart wouldn't want you to be more like Marlene....

PEARL

He does admire her so much... How did we get to talking about this? (Beat) Did you see the sculpture that Emma brought home from school yesterday?

PEYTON

No. She told me she was doing paper mache..

PEARL

It's this fantastic, mythic animal. I think she's a truly gifted child. I really do. It's given me so much JOY to watch her grow over the years...

Peyton takes a drink of water. She smiles tightly.

PEARL

Each step has been like a little miracle to me. The first time she said my name. The first kiss. I wouldn't have missed any of it for all the money in the world.

Peyton's smile appears to be frozen onto her face. Pearl strokes Joe's head.

PEARL

My family is the most important thing in my life.

PEYTON

Excuse me a moment.

Peyton stands and walks away from the table.

INT. RESTAURANT BATHROOM - DAY

Peyton enters a stall. She closes the door. She takes a deep breath. Her lip curls.

(CONTINUED) -- ~

CONTINUED:

With all her might Peyton violently KICKS at the stall door. Again and again. Harder and harder. Loud GRUNTS accompany the effort. From the outside of the stall, huge dents are now visible.

The adjacent stall door opens slightly. A terrified WOMAN runs from it out the bathroom door, trailed by a long piece of toilet paper which is stuck to her shoe.

INT. RESTAURANT CASHIER - DAY

Pearl pays the CASHIER. Joe sits in his stroller beside her. Peyton walks up behind them. She is composed, not a crack of strain showing.

PEYTON  
Sorry I was so long.

PEARL  
You okay?

Peyton takes the stroller.

PEYTON  
Of course.

The Cashier leans forward to get a better look at Joe.

CASHIER  
That's a beautiful baby you have there.

Pearl and Peyton answer together.

PEARL & PEYTON  
Thank you.

Peyton turns and rolls the stroller out the door. Pearl watches after her, wondering if she heard right....

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Pearl stands on a long line with Peyton and Joe. A window is freed and she steps forward, reaching into her purse. Her brow furrows as she digs through it. She looks over at Peyton, terror in her eyes.

PEARL  
I can't find it. Peyton, I can't find Bart's envelope!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEYTON  
It must be there. I SAW you put  
it in.

Pearl looks to the POST OFFICE ATTENDANT.

PEARL  
I need to send something overnight,  
but I can't seem to..find...

Pearl begins taking out the contents of her purse, emptying them  
onto the counter. Her BREATHING becomes labored. She grabs  
an INHALER and breathes from it.

PEYTON  
Pearl, maybe we ought to let these  
people go first.

Peyton takes Pearl's arm and gently leads her aside. Pearl is  
WHEEZING badly.

PEYTON  
Are you alright?

PEARL  
It's my asthma. It'll pass.

People in the Post Office are staring.

PEYTON  
Let's get you some air...

PEARL  
(panic in her voice)  
Bart's proposal...

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Pearl and Bart, dressed for bed, brush their teeth in silence.  
Pearl spits first, wipes her mouth.

PEARL  
Someone must have stolen it from  
my purse. It just disappeared.  
I've turned the house upside  
down...

Bart nods wearily. Beat.

PEARL  
What did they say when you called  
again? They will accept it late?

Bart spits into the sink.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BART  
(monotone)  
They said they'd take it.

PEARL  
But it will be considered last?

BART  
We've been over this, Pearl.

Bart puts his hand solidly on her shoulder.

BART  
It's going to be alright.

PEARL  
(anguished)  
Oh, Bart. I'm so sorry.

BART  
I know you are, honey.

PEARL  
Bart--

BART  
Please Pearl. I'm very, very  
tired.

He leaves the bathroom. Pearl stares after him.

INT. PEYTON'S ROOM - NIGHT

Peyton stands by an open window, dressed in a tank tee shirt. She lights a match on the sill and puts it to the edge of a PIECE OF PAPER. Peyton holds it out the window and gently blows the flame, keeping it alive.

Moving in, we see that it is BART'S PROPOSAL ENVELOPE....

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A purple bug zapper sways slowly in the warm wind. It ZAPS a bug dead.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NURSERY - NIGHT

Pearl changes Joe's diaper, a portable phone jammed in her neck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL  
 Yesterday? We went shopping. Um  
 hmmm. (beat) I don't know,  
 Marlene. She's downstairs  
 somewhere with Bart and Emma. Why?

Joe wriggles, making Pearl's job harder.

PEARL  
 Of course everything's fine. How  
 else should it be?

Joe starts to CRY.

PEARL  
 Look, I gotta run...What? Yes, yes,  
 I PROMISE I'll call tomorrow. Okay,  
 bye..

Pearl picks Joe up and bounces him. He continues to cry.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Peyton sits on the floor with the plastic pieces of the model airplane kit spread around her. Bart and Emma look over Peyton's shoulder.

EMMA  
 Wow. That's cool.

PEYTON  
 The instructions are confusing.

Bart fits two plastic pieces together, his head very close to Peyton's.

BART  
 I stared at this thing forever and  
 I couldn't for the life of me  
 figure it out.

Peyton turns the plastic part around in Bart's hand.

PEYTON  
 No. It fits in this way.

Bart looks up at her touch. They lock eyes.

EMMA  
 If it weren't for Peyton, we NEVER  
 would have figured it out!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEYTON

Hey, Emma. I've got to talk to your Daddy a moment about something grown up. Why don't you go upstairs and get out Dolly?

EMMA

Okay.. Will you come up soon?

PEYTON

Promise.

Emma runs upstairs. Bart moves away from Peyton a fraction.

PEYTON

Bart, I've had this idea, and I wanted to run it by you.

BART

Shoot.

PEYTON

Pearl told me your tenth anniversary's coming up, and I thought it might be nice to give her a surprise party. You could invite all your friends, have a band..

BART

That's a great idea, Peyton, and very sweet of you. I think Pearl would love it.

PEYTON

I'd organize it myself, but I don't know enough of Pearl's friends. I thought maybe Maureen might want to help..

BART

Marlene. I'm sure she'd be up for it. I could get together with her and make an invitation list, and then we can arrange a date and place, music I guess, and food...

PEYTON

Only thing, Bart, don't tell Marlene it was my idea.

BART

Why not?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PEYTON

I just don't want her to feel..  
competitive, you know what I mean?

BART

You know Marlene pretty well.

JOE'S CRIES APPROACH. Pearl enters, holding the baby, whose face is red with CRYING. Peyton stands.

PEYTON

Here. Let me relieve you.

Peyton takes the baby from Pearl and jogs him a bit, whispering in his ear. The BABY QUICKLY STOPS CRYING. Bart gets off from the floor, goes to Pearl.

BART

Peyton solved the great model  
airplane mystery.

PEARL

I see. That's wonderful.

INT. HALLWAY/NANNY'S ROOM - DAY

Pearl walks down the hallway with her watering can. The Nanny's room door is ajar. Pearl knocks.

PEYTON (O.S.)

Come in!

Pearl opens the door.

PEARL

I just wanted to water-

REVEAL PEYTON standing topless by the bed. She wears only a pair of faded blue jeans. Pearl shyly turns away.

PEARL

I'm sorry- I came to water the  
plant...

PEYTON

Sorry about what? Come on in.

Peyton casually grabs a tee shirt from a drawer. Pearl moves to the plant and quickly waters it. Peyton slips on her shirt. Pearl walks to the door. She turns.

PEARL

Bart called. He won't be home for  
dinner. Business thing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEYTON

Great. We'll have a girl's night.

Pearl pauses shyly at the door.

PEYTON

What?

PEARL

This is ridiculous to say, but I had no idea you were so... so... well endowed.

Peyton laughs.

PEYTON

I suppose that's a complement.

PEARL

They're bigger than mine, and I'm breastfeeding.

PEYTON

They get the job done. Not that I've got a man to appreciate them. Can't remember the last time I got laid.

PEARL

I know how you feel. Since the baby, Bart and I can't seem to get it together.

Peyton slips a sweater over her head. Looks at Pearl.

PEYTON

Give it some time. I have a feeling things are going to heat up around here.

EXT. YARD - DAY

The rectangular frame of the greenhouse is now visible. Pearl and Solomon stand over a two by four. Pearl holds a STUD DRIVER in her hand.

SOLOMON

Okay. Now you try.

Pearl kneels down. She fits the end of the driver against the wood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLOMON  
Brace yourself first..

Pearl puts her other hand onto the grass, and then....

WHAM.

The gun fires the nail off to the side.

SOLOMON  
Maybe you better let me do these  
for you.

Pearl stands and hands him the gun.

PEARL  
It's the force of the shot. I  
can't keep it against the wood.

SOLOMON  
I'll say.

Solomon kneels. WHAM. The gun fires the nail through the wood  
and into the concrete.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Joe's smiling face peers out from under a blanket. Peyton  
gently jogs him in the carriage, back and forth, looking into  
his face and cooing. They stand beneath a shady elm, surrounded  
by the noises of children at play.

WOMAN (O.S.)  
Boy or a girl?

Peyton turns. A pale, drab-looking WOMAN sits nearby on a  
bench, holding a baby. Her voice is flat.

PEYTON  
Boy. His name is Joe.

Peyton picks Joe up out of the carriage and shows him proudly  
to the Woman.

WOMAN  
He's beautiful. Mine's a girl.  
Samantha.

PEYTON  
How many months?

WOMAN  
Nine. She's my third.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEYTON  
Joe's my second. The older one's  
a girl. Emma.

Beat. Peyton cuddles the baby.

PEYTON  
I'm very blessed. Both my kids  
are terribly bright. And so  
beautiful. Joe here has his  
father's eyes.

Peyton looks up at the Woman.

PEYTON  
But Emma looks just like me.

EXT. BARTEL HOUSE - DAY

Peyton walks up to the house pushing Joe in the stroller. She  
pauses to take note of a MAROON JAGUAR parked in the driveway.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Pearl and Marlene sit on the couch. Peyton enters carrying Joe.

PEARL  
Peyton, you remember Marlene?

PEYTON  
Of course. Good to see you again,  
Marlene.

MARLENE  
Feeling's mutual, Peyton.

Marlene puts out her cigarette and stands to go.

MARLENE  
I'm off to show a property.

PEYTON  
I hope I didn't interrupt...

PEARL  
No, no, don't be silly.

PEYTON  
Marlene, why don't you join us for  
dinner tonight? Bart's working late,  
and we're having a girl's night.

(CONTINUED) ~

CONTINUED:

PEARL

Oh, yes, Marlene, join us. Marty  
can fend for himself for an  
evening..

MARLENE

Sounds great, but I can't.

PEYTON

We have more than enough food...

Marlene picks up her purse and walks to the door.

MARLENE

Thanks, but I have something...  
I can't tonight.

PEYTON

What do you have?

Marlene shoots her a look.

MARLENE

That is none of your business.

PEARL

Marlene!

MARLENE

I'm late.

Marlene is out the door. Pearl and Peyton look at each other  
a beat.

PEARL

That was strange.

PEYTON

Wonder what it was that made her  
so uncomfortable.

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Peyton and Emma watch television together. Pearl enters the  
room.

PEARL

Couldn't reach him at the lab.

PEYTON

Really? What time is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL  
Late. That means up to bed, young lady.

EMMA  
Just fifteen minutes more....

PEARL  
Now. Brush up and I'll come tuck you in.

Emma leaves. Peyton turns off the television set. Beat.

PEYTON  
Pearl, I was thinking. Why don't you and Bart go away for your anniversary next month? I can take care of the kids.

PEARL  
Go away?

PEYTON  
Like a second honeymoon. Just the two of you.

PEARL  
(distracted)  
Sounds like heaven on earth...

PEYTON  
You're really worried, aren't you?

Pearl nods.

PEYTON  
Call Marty. He might know where Bart is.

PEARL  
Good idea.

Pearl walks to the phone and dials.

PEARL  
Hello, Marty? Pearl. Listen, I was wondering if you'd heard anything from Bart tonight, if he'd stopped by... No? Okay. Nothing, nothing. I'm sure he'll be along any minute. (Beat) Listen, can I speak to Marlene a moment? She's not. I see. Okay, Marty. Good night.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Pearl hangs up the telephone, puzzled.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Bart and Marlene sit at a booth. Bart writes on a legal pad.

BART  
We can't leave out the Balian's.  
They always invite us.

MARLENE  
We have to draw the line somewhere,  
Bart. We can't invite everyone  
you know.

Bart gestures at her pack of cigarettes.

BART  
Give me another one.

Marlene hands him a cigarette and lights it for him.

MARLENE  
Pearl would want the party  
intimate. Trust me. We're getting  
it down to twenty if it takes all  
night.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lights are out, but Pearl's wide awake, lying on her back. Bart tiptoes in, and undresses quietly.

PEARL  
I'm awake.

BART  
Sorry I woke you. Go back to  
sleep.

PEARL  
Woke me? As if I've been able to  
sleep! Where have you been?

BART  
I told you I'd be working late.

PEARL  
I called the lab. There was no  
answer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BART  
I was..I was working in one of the  
rooms without a phone. I'm sorry  
I didn't call.

PEARL  
I was so worried.

Bart takes her into his arms.

BART  
I didn't mean to scare you, Angel.

Pearl pulls back.

PEARL  
Have you been smoking?

BART  
Uh..one of the Techs was smoking.  
Must be in my hair.

PEARL  
Oh.

BART  
Let's get some sleep, huh?

Bart lies down again. Pearl stares at his back.

PEARL  
Bart. Let's go away for our  
anniversary. Just us two. Nobody  
else. Peyton can take care of the  
kids..

Beat.

BART  
Is that what you want?

PEARL  
Very much.

BART  
Then you got it.

INT. PEYTON'S ROOM - NIGHT

Peyton lies in bed playing with a small POKER MACHINE. She pulls down a lever, and five windows start spinning. They stop one by one, like a slot machine.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Half dressed, Bart furtively walks to the phone, picks it up, dials.

INTERCUT BART AND MARLENE AT THE OFFICE

BART  
Hey. It's me.

MARLENE  
What's up?

BART  
Party's off.

MARLENE  
Off? What's the problem?

BART  
I can't really talk now, but I  
wanted to get you before you called  
the caterer...

MARLENE  
Whatever the problem is, we can  
solve it--

EXT. HALLWAY - DAY

Pearl walks toward the half-closed bedroom door. SHE HEARS BART WHISPERING INSIDE and stops in her tracks.

BART (O.S.)  
(whisper)  
Marlene, I'll call you when I reach  
the lab...

Pearl pushes the door open.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Pearl enters. Bart stands quickly from the bed, moves to the closet. Pearl straightens the bed. Long beat of silence.

PEARL  
(nonchalant)  
Who was that on the phone?

BART  
Technician. I've got to get to  
work.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pearl continues smoothing the bed.

INT. NURSERY - MORNING

Peyton enters, looks up and down the hallway, then closes the door. She lifts Joe from the crib and unbuttons her blouse, all the time keeping her eyes on the closed door. Joe hungrily grabs at Peyton's breast.

PEYTON  
Hungry, my darling?

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Solomon steadies a ladder against the side of the house. He carries a paint can and brush up the ladder. He puts them on the top step.

INT. NURSERY - DAY

The child sucks at Peyton's breast.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Solomon pauses from his painting to wipe his forehead... HE SEES PEYTON AND THE BABY INSIDE.

Shaken, Solomon quickly backs down the ladder... but then remembers the paint can and brush. He lifts them from the ladder step and they CLANK against the window pane.

Solomon freezes. Peyton reacts to the noise. She SPINS to face the window, the baby at her breast. THEIR EYES LOCK for a fleeting moment... Solomon hurries down the ladder.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - DAY

Pearl and Emma wait for the bus. They are silent a moment. Pearl checks her watch.

PEARL  
If you'd go right when you got up,  
this wouldn't happen.

EMMA  
I don't have to GO then.

Solomon walks briskly by without stopping.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMMA  
What's wrong with Solomon?

PEARL  
I don't know.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Solomon is making himself a cup of coffee. Pearl enters.

PEARL  
Solomon, are you alright?

Solomon faces Pearl, confusion on his face. His mouth works without saying anything. Then:

PEYTON (O.S.)  
Good morning.

Pearl and Solomon both spin around. Solomon's eyes open in fear. He bolts from the room.

PEARL  
Solomon!

PEARL  
He's been acting so strange lately.

Peyton dumps out the rest of the coffee in the pot.

PEYTON  
Too much caffeine.

Peyton washes out the coffee pot.

PEYTON  
Everything alright with Bart?

PEARL  
Oh, yes. He was just working late at the lab, that's all.

PEYTON  
I knew it was perfectly innocent.

The phone RINGS. Peyton picks it up.

PEYTON  
Hello? Oh, hi, Marlene. Hang on a moment.

Peyton holds the phone out to Pearl. Pearl hesitates, then mouths to Peyton "I'll call back". Peyton nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEYTON  
 She's busy right now Marlene. Can  
 I have her call you back? Okay.  
 Bye..

Peyton hangs up the telephone with a small smile of victory.  
 There is a CLICK as the receiver hits the cradle.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Marlene sits at her desk, staring at the receiver. She hangs  
 up and takes a drag from a cigarette.

MARLENE  
 Bitch.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Solomon stirs a can of paint with a stick. Emma runs up to him.  
 She carries a PAPER MACHE SCULPTURE that looks like a formless  
 blob.

EMMA  
 Did you see what I made!

Solomon stands to inspect it, wiping his hands on his pants.

EMMA  
 It's a pretend animal. Its head  
 is a lion, see here, and then it  
 has wings, here.

Solomon concentrates very hard on what Emma is saying.

SOLOMON  
 I see. I see. Is this a tail,  
 or is it a foot?

EMMA  
 That's part of the fur.

SOLOMON  
 Of course. I see now. This is  
 a piece of art, Emma.

PEYTON (O.S.)  
 Hi, Emma! You're home early.

Solomon freezes. Peyton walks up from the house.

EMMA  
 It was half day assembly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEYTON  
I see. (Beat) Hello, Solomon.

Solomon does not respond. He kneels down to stir the paint.

PEYTON  
Emma, go on inside. I want to have  
a word with Solomon.

Emma runs off obediently. Long beat as Peyton stands over  
Solomon. He continues stirring the blue paint.

PEYTON  
Are you a retard?

SOLOMON  
N-n-o.

Peyton leans over him. Solomon's face is beet red.

PEYTON  
Are you toilet trained?

Solomon looks up, so mad he cannot speak. HIS HAND IS A FIST.  
Peyton smiles.

PEYTON  
Go ahead.

Peyton leans down so that she is very close to his EAR. Then  
she GRABS IT AND TWISTS IT HARD. Solomon grimaces in pain.

PEYTON  
Don't fuck with me. Retard.

Peyton lets go, turns, and walks back to the house. Solomon  
yells after her, his hand to his head.

SOLOMON  
They're my friends. I won't let  
you hurt them!

EXT. YARD - DUSK

The sprinkler system starts up. Solomon locks up the garage.  
He takes a NEW RED BICYCLE which leans against the wall and  
wheels it outside.

EMMA (O.S.)  
Wait!

Emma runs up to Solomon and gives him a big hug.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMMA

You forgot our game!

Solomon picks Emma up and swings her around once.

SOLOMON

I didn't forget! Let's go.

Solomon puts the bicycle down. They hold hands, and together they go running through the sprinkler, shrieking and laughing.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - DUSK

Pearl and Peyton fold laundry. Peyton peers out the window, beyond which Solomon's and Emma's antics are visible. Pearl notices, looks over her shoulder, and smiles.

PEARL

Did you see Solomon's new bicycle?  
Bart bought it for him.

PEYTON

That's quite an.. involved game  
they're playing.

PEARL

Emma just adores him.

Peyton stops folding.

PEYTON

Pearl, I have to speak my mind.

PEARL

Alright.

PEYTON

Does Solomon have any sexual abuses  
on his record?

Pearl stops.

PEARL

Sexual abuses?

PEYTON

It's none of my business, I know.

PEARL

What are you trying to say?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEYTON  
I've been observing some.. well,  
inappropriate behavior.

Pearl blanches.

PEARL  
What do you mean, inappropriate?

PEYTON  
Touchy feely stuff. I'm sure I'm  
wrong. I know how much you trust  
Solomon.

PEARL  
Of course you misunderstood.  
Solomon would never do a thing like  
that.

A beat. Pearl looks out the window. Solomon and Emma, now  
soaking wet, are playing a game of tag. Emma wears only her  
pale blue underwear....

PEARL  
Do you mind finishing up? I forgot  
something.

Pearl leaves the room. Peyton folds a pair of EMMA'S TINY  
PANTIES. She stops, fingers the SOFT BLUE COTTON. Peyton slips  
them into her pocket.

EXT. YARD - DUSK

Pearl steps outside with a towel.

PEARL  
Emma!

Emma runs to Pearl, who quickly wraps the towel around her.

PEARL  
It's cold out here!

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark. Pearl lies in bed, her eyes wide open.

PEARL  
Bart?

Bart gives a sleepy GRUNT.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL  
How well do we really know Solomon?

BART  
Huh?

PEARL  
Do you think we're too trusting?

BART  
No...

PEARL  
I mean in a bad way. Like the way  
I trusted Dr. Mott.

Bart turns over and puts an arm around Pearl.

BART  
You've got to let that stuff go,  
Angel. Try to sleep.

Pearl stares out into the dark.

EXT. YARD - DAY

The frame of the greenhouse is in place. Emma holds up a large strip of fiberglass while Pearl CUTS out a precise rectangle.

EMMA  
Where will this piece go?

PEARL  
This is for the walls. We'll use  
glass for the ceiling, and that's  
more complicated. Hold it steady,  
now.

EMMA  
When it's done, can we grow  
strawberries?

PEARL  
We can grow whatever you want,  
sweetheart.

Peyton approaches with Joe.

PEYTON  
How's it going out here?

EMMA  
Great!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEYTON  
 Pearl, do we have any extra  
 batteries? Joe's mobile konked out.

Pearl stands, wipes off her hands.

PEARL  
 I'll get them for you. They're  
 in the garage.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Pearl enters and pauses, allowing her eyes to adjust to the dark. She walks to a shelf, stands on tip toes, and reaches back. Slightly irritated, she pulls some dirty paint brushes off the shelf...

Then she feels something that disturbs her. Slowly she pulls it out, revealing... a bit of BLUE COTTON with RUFFLES. She knows what this material is even before she grabs it, holds it out in front of her face in horror.

Pearl turns and sees a form behind her.... She SCREAMS. SOLOMON STANDS IN THE DOORWAY. He drops a can of paint, puts his hands to his head and SCREAMS.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Solomon exits the garage and sprints down the block. Pearl is already halfway up the lawn, the BLUE COTTON CLENCHED IN HER HAND. Bart runs toward her.

PEARL  
 It's Solomon. He's been molesting  
 Emma. Oh my God....

Pearl begins to WHEEZE.

BART  
 Are you sure?

PEARL  
 He's taken her panties--

She shows Bart the blue cotton.

PEARL  
 All those horrible games...

BART  
 It's okay.. it's okay. Can you  
 get to an inhaler?

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pearl sits on the couch, the inhaler beside her. Peyton sits nearby with Emma in her lap. She strokes Emma's hair, soothing her.

PEYTON  
Breathing better?

PEARL  
Yes, thank you. I can't believe this...

PEYTON  
It'll be alright, Pearl.

Emma starts to cry.

EMMA  
I don't understand. Why are those men taking Solomon away?

PEARL  
(barely in control)  
Baby, I...

Peyton stands.

PEYTON  
Come on, Emma. Let's go for a walk, huh?

Peyton and Emma leave the room. Pearl stands and looks out the window. Bart talks quietly with a POLICEMAN outside. Next to them, Solomon is held by another POLICEMAN, his hands cuffed behind his back. The Policemen begin escorting Solomon away. Solomon struggles wildly and SCREAMS at Bart.

SOLOMON  
Noooo! Please! Pearl! What did I do wrong? Pearl! Don't let them take me!

Pearl shuts the window so hard it RATTLES.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Pearl rinses her teeth. Another toothbrush with paste sits on the sink. Bart picks it up and starts to brush. Strong tension in the air.

PEARL  
You're acting like it's my fault..

Bart keeps brushing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL  
I brought him in the house and I  
let it happen, right?

BART  
Of course it's not your fault,  
Pearl. I'm just upset, okay? Am  
I allowed to be upset when my  
daughter is sexually molested?

PEARL  
How could I have known? You didn't  
pick up on anything either..

BART  
I'm not here all day. I can't do  
everything myself.

PEARL  
What the hell does that mean?!

Emma stands in the doorway, watching silently. She turns and  
walks away.

INT. NANNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Peyton lies in bed playing with the poker machine. She pulls  
down a lever, and the five windows start to spin. There is a  
KNOCK on the door.

PEYTON  
Who is it?

EMMA  
It's Emma.

PEYTON  
Come on in, sweetheart.

Emma enters the room. She stands shyly by the door.

PEYTON  
What's wrong? Come here.

EMMA  
I had a bad dream. Mom and Dad  
are fighting.

PEYTON  
Would you like to sleep with me?

Emma nods, relieved. Peyton moves over on the bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEYTON

Hop in.

Emma gets in bed. Peyton strokes her hair.

PEYTON

Don't worry.. Peyton's going to take good care of you...

EMMA

I bet your Mommy and Daddy didn't fight.

PEYTON

Well Emma, truth be told, I didn't have parents like you do.

EMMA

Then who took care of you?

PEYTON

I took care of myself. And I had friends in the Casino. That's the place where I worked.

EMMA

But.. where was your Mommy?

PEYTON

My mother died when I was very little.

Emma looks up at her, horrified.

EMMA

She died? How did she die?

PEYTON

I think she died because she was very sad. My father was a mean mean man. Not like your Daddy. He used to hurt us.

Emma's eyes are wide with fascination.

PEYTON

You want to hear a secret? When I was your age all I ever wanted was a family just like yours.

EMMA

But you ARE in our family now. We can be your NEW family.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Peyton hugs the child to her. Then she picks up the poker machine.

PEYTON  
You want to learn a new game?

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Pearl and Peyton make the master bed in silence. Pearl creates a sloppy hospital corner. She stops, visibly upset.

PEYTON  
You've got to stop blaming yourself.

PEARL  
Bart blames me. He won't say it directly, but I know that's what he thinks. Peyton, if you hadn't said something, God only knows--

Peyton pats the bed.

PEYTON  
Sit down.

Pearl sits. Peyton sits beside her and softly strokes her back.

PEYTON  
Emma's going to be fine. The Counselor said her denial is natural.

PEARL  
If she wasn't I'd never forgive myself.

PEYTON  
Shhh. Relax.

Peyton starts to rub Pearl's shoulders, gently pushing her forward. Pearl stretches onto her stomach.

PEARL  
Mmmmmmm.

Peyton gets onto her knees. She runs her fingers up and down Pearl's back.

PEARL  
That feels good.

Peyton's fingers delicately grace Pearl's neck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL  
There's another reason why Emma's  
being molested is so devastating.

Peyton's hands run through Pearl's hair, gently massaging her  
scalp.

PEYTON  
(soothing voice)  
Now what is that?

PEARL  
I was molested. Nine months ago.  
By a doctor.

The massage stops for a beat.

PEYTON  
How awful.

Peyton straddles Pearl. She slowly lifts her shirt up past her  
breasts. She undoes Pearl's bra with a SNAP.

PEARL  
I didn't scream. I froze. Bart  
blames me because I let it happen.

Peyton's long nails travel down from Pearl's shoulders to the  
base of her back, and then around her waist. Pearl tilts her  
hips slightly upward...

PEARL  
Somewhere... I think he wonders  
if I enjoyed it.

Pearl's eyes close with pleasure. Peyton leans forward and  
whispers in her ear.

PEYTON  
Did you? Enjoy it?

Another pause.

PEARL  
I hated every second.

Pearl turns her head. In the mirror behind them, Pearl sees  
their reflection: Peyton, on all fours, leaning forward. And  
Pearl turning her head around, as if for a kiss. Their faces  
are inches apart.

PEYTON  
(a whisper)  
It must have been terrible for you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Peyton abruptly pulls away. In an instant she's off the bed and gone. Pearl is left lying face down, her shirt pulled up to her breasts. Awkwardly she sits up, her hair messy, her face flushed.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Emma high up on a swing, her legs pumping to push her higher each time. The swing is caught and STOPPED. Peyton peeks around the swing and kisses Emma on the cheek.

EMMA

Peyton!!!!

PEYTON

Tell Peyton. Which one is he?

EXT. SANDBOX - DAY

Roth holds court, squatting in the sand, surrounded by three BOYS playing with transformers, watching his every move.

ROTH

So he's illing me, you know what I'm saying?

The Boys nod solemnly. One BLOND BOY accidentally hits Roth's foot.

BLOND

Sorry Roth. I'm really sorry.

ROTH

Watch it, Trippy.

Peyton's legs appear beside Roth. Before he can react, he is yanked to his feet.

ROTH

Ouch! My arm!

Peyton pulls him higher up, twisting his arm at a horrifying angle.

ROTH

Owwwww! Mrs. Henry!!!

Peyton pulls Roth's face very close to hers. He is crying in pain.

PEYTON

I have a message from Emma.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Roth whimpers. Peyton wrenches some more.

PEYTON

Leave her alone, Roth. If you  
continue messing with her, I'm  
going to rip your head off. Am  
I clear?

ROTH

I get it! Let me go!

An audience of children has gathered. Peyton drops Roth, who sags into a crying heap on the ground. The other children watch in stunned fascination. Emma stands by herself near the swings, watching.

EXT. SWINGS - DAY

Emma watches Peyton's approach. As she passes Emma, Peyton gives a wink. Peyton keeps on going. A tug on Emma's arm. It's TRIPPY, still holding his transformer.

TRIPPY

She your Mom?

EMMA

None of your business.

TRIPPY

Wanna play with my transformer?

EMMA

Maybe later.

Emma walks inside. The other children step aside for her.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

MUSAK over loudspeakers. Pearl walks down a food aisle holding Joe. Beside her, Peyton pushes a cart.

PEARL

We'll need some rice. I think  
we're out.

PEYTON

I bought some last week.

PEARL

I know. But I think we used it  
up.

Peyton turns to her and smiles sweetly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEYTON  
This is why you should just let  
me do the shopping...

WOMAN (O.S.)  
Hi! I didn't know you shopped here..

It's THE WOMAN FROM THE PARK. Peyton's hands CLENCH the bar  
of the cart. Pearl notices.

The Woman walks towards them. She looks at Pearl, smiling.

WOMAN  
Is this your nanny?...

Peyton abruptly turns her cart around and walks in the opposite  
direction. Pearl follows. The Woman stops and shrugs.

PEARL  
Who was that?

Peyton looks straight ahead.

PEYTON  
Your guess is as good as mine.

PEARL  
But she seemed to know you.

PEYTON  
Are you calling me a liar?

PEARL  
No. Of course not.

Peyton continues walking down the aisle.

EXT. PARK - DAY

A FOOTBALL FLIES through the air. A perfect spiral, landing  
squarely on Emma's chest and bouncing off again.

BART  
Almost! Next time, hug the ball to  
you. Hug the ball.

Pearl and Peyton lay lunch out on a blanket, Joe beside them.  
Bart and Emma throw nearby.

PEARL  
Come and eat!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bart and Emma sit down on the blanket. Bart picks Joe up and rocks him gently.

BART  
You're getting much better, Emma.  
Just have to remember to embrace  
the ball, really bring it to your  
chest.

Peyton puts plates in front of Bart and Emma. Bart takes a bite from his sandwich and dramatically puts down his plate.

BART  
Pearl, these are the best  
sandwiches you've ever made.

PEARL  
Peyton made the sandwiches.

PEYTON  
They're easy. Old family recipe.  
Turkey, mustard, and cranberry  
sauce.

BART  
Cranberry. That's the kick.

EMMA  
Mmmmm! Good sandwich.

Pearl holds out her bowl.

PEARL  
There's lots of my famous potato  
salad everybody! I know it's your  
favorite..

BART  
I've got enough for now, honey.

EMMA  
Maybe later, Mom.

EXT. PARK - LATER

Emma bends down, the football between her legs.

BART (O.S.)  
Popeye, Olive Oil, Bluto, HIKE!

Emma hikes the ball to Bart and takes off down the field. Peyton goes out and fakes a right. Bart walks back with the ball and throws a tiny toss to Emma. She drops it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEYTON  
Ohhhhh! Almost!

Bart retrieves the ball. He looks over at Pearl, who sits on the blanket, breathing from an inhaler.

BART  
You okay? We can go home, you know Angel.

PEARL  
(irritable)  
I'm fine.

BART  
Okay, gang! Huddle up!

Peyton and Emma and Bart stand in a tight circle while Bart gives instructions.

BART  
Ready, BREAK!

They all CLAP and take positions. Bart throws the ball high into the air. Peyton catches it and runs in the opposite direction. Emma and Bart chase after and tackle her.

Pearl watches as the three of them end up in a heap on the grass, laughing.

INT. MOVING CAR - DUSK

CLOSE ON Pearl's brooding expression. The car is full of LAUGHTER.

EMMA  
Roth says Vanna White is a robot only with real person's titties.

BART  
He does, does he?

PEYTON  
Watch your language, Emma.

Pearl turns around to face Emma.

PEARL  
Are you and Roth getting along better now?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMMA  
Oh, yeah, Mom. Since Peyton fixed it, I even get to hang out in the sandbox.

PEARL  
Peyton?

EMMA  
Peyton came to school and fixed everything.

Pearl turns back around. She stares out the window.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The phone RINGS. Peyton, holding the picnic basket, runs to it and picks it up.

PEYTON  
Hello? Uh.. I'm sorry, Marlene. Pearl isn't available right now. I'll tell her you called...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Potato salad poured out of the bowl into the garbage. Peyton enters. Pearl washes out the bowl in the sink. Peyton unpacks the basket. Long beat of silence.

PEARL  
Who was that on the phone?

PEYTON  
Wrong number. Salad go bad?

PEARL  
Yup.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is empty and quiet. Dressed in a robe, Pearl turns off the lights. She pauses by the coffee table.

Pearl picks up the PAPERWEIGHT. She walks to the mantle and deliberately places it there. She stands back to look at it.

## INT. MARLENE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Marlene, a cigarette hanging from her mouth, sits on the bed and expertly rolls on a pair of stockings. Marty hikes on a pair of pants and puts on a belt.

MARLENE  
Something's wrong. I know wrong  
when I see it.

MARTY  
What's the big deal? So she hasn't  
called. People get busy, Marlene.

Marlene stands, throws a pair of pumps on the floor and steps into them.

MARLENE  
Ten will get you twenty that bitch  
hasn't been giving her my messages.  
You missed a loop.

Marlene moves to Marty and rethreads his belt.

MARTY  
You've been pissing and moaning  
about this for weeks. Why don't  
you just go on over there?

MARLENE  
Stand still.

## INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Peyton enters through the back door with a bagful of groceries. She puts them on the counter and walks upstairs.

## INT. NURSERY - DAY

Peyton enters quietly, an expectant, loving look on her face. But the CRIB IS EMPTY. Her expression shifts to one of panic. The doorbell RINGS. She runs for it.

## INT. FOYER - DAY

Peyton flings open the door, REVEALING MARLENE. Her lips go white with frustration. She grabs the doorjam tightly, as if to brace herself.

PEYTON  
Hello, Marlene. How nice of you  
to drop by.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARLENE

Pearl here?

PEYTON

No. She is not. I don't know  
where Pearl is.

Marlene cranes her neck to see inside. Peyton does not move her arm. Marlene notes the white knuckles against the wood.

PEYTON

She's not here. I'll tell her you  
stopped by.

Marlene looks her in the eye.

MARLENE

Sure you will.

Peyton slowly closes the door on Marlene.

EXT. HOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

Pearl pulls into the driveway. Joe sits in the baby seat.

INT. FOYER - DAY

A KEY TURNED IN THE LOCK, and Pearl enters carrying Joe. She has barely stepped inside when Peyton is upon them.

PEYTON

Where have you been?

PEARL

I took Joe to the Doctor. He was  
running a slight fever--

PEYTON

A fever? Is he alright?

PEARL

The Doctor said he's fine. He  
prescribed some antibiotic--

PEYTON

Here. Let me hold him...

Peyton snatches the baby from Pearl's arms, and holds him to her breast with relief.

PEYTON

Thank God...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL

Peyton, we were only gone an hour--

Peyton stares at Pearl a long beat.

PEYTON

You should have waited for me.

PEARL

I..I'm sorry Peyton.. But I AM  
the child's mother.

A long beat. Peyton takes a deep breath. Then she smiles very,  
very sweetly.

PEYTON

Of course you are, Pearl. Of  
course you are.

EXT. YARD - DAY

The greenhouse is nearly complete. Everything appears half a  
measurement off. Ribbed fiberglass covers the walls and the  
swinging door, while the ceiling is still only a wooden grid.

Pearl, protective goggles pushed up on her head, climbs a  
ladder, gingerly carrying a SQUARE OF GLASS. She places it into  
the wooden grid. It fits. Bart, dressed for work, walks over.  
She walks down the ladder and takes off her gloves.

BART

Are you using glass?

PEARL

Glass will keep the heat in best.  
It's also cost efficient.

BART

Is it safe?

PEARL

Of course it's safe.

BART

Pearl, is something wrong?

Peyton approaches, pushing Joe in his stroller.

PEYTON

I'm taking Joe to the park.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL  
Right now? I wanted to take him  
shopping for shoes.

PEYTON  
He needs the sunshine. He can get  
shoes tomorrow.

BART  
You can take Joe for shoes after  
his walk, honey.

Beat.

PEARL  
Alright. But don't be too long.

Peyton wheels Joe off. Bart kisses Pearl.

BART  
Looks great. See you later.

PEARL  
Okay. See you.

Bart takes off. Pearl puts on her goggles and gloves.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Peyton feeds Joe. Pearl enters, sweaty and dirty.

PEARL  
I didn't know you were back. The  
exterior is finished.

No response. She throws her gloves onto the counter.

PEARL  
I'm going to the hardware store.  
Be back in fifteen.

Peyton looks up and smiles sweetly.

PEYTON  
We'll be here.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Peyton walks to the greenhouse and stares at it a moment. She  
pulls open the swinging door and lets it go. The door SMASHES  
closed harshly, SHAKING the frame.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Peyton climbs up the ladder. She leans over and PUSHES ASKEW ONE OF THE PANES OF GLASS NEAREST TO THE DOOR.

THE PANE OF GLASS HANGS PRECARIOUSLY, POISED TO FALL....

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Pearl pulls into the driveway.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Peyton watches through the window as Pearl walks out into the yard, toward the greenhouse. Joe begins to cry. Peyton picks him up.

PEYTON

Ready for your nap sweetheart?

EXT. YARD - DAY

Pearl walks to the greenhouse door, reaches for the handle...

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The YELLOW SCHOOL BUS pulls to a stop. Emma jumps off.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Pearl's hand on the door handle...

EMMA (O.S.)

Hey, Mom.

Pearl turns. Opens her arms for Emma to jump in. Emma gives her a half hearted hug.

PEARL

How was your day?

EMMA

Okay. Peyton home?

PEARL

Yes. Hey, guess what! I'm almost finished with the greenhouse. Are you ready to be in charge of the strawberries?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMMA

I guess.

PEARL

We can start on the planting boxes  
right now... let me get my gloves.  
Be right back.

Pearl turns back to the house. Emma walks around the  
greenhouse, checking it out.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Pearl's gloves on the countertop. She grabs them up. Peyton  
enters.

PEYTON

Getting to work?

PEARL

Emma and I are going to start on  
the planters.

Peyton's face changes.

PEYTON

Emma's home?

EXT. YARD - DAY

EMMA GRABS THE DOOR HANDLE.... The pane of GLASS HANGS  
PRECARIOUSLY above....

Emma pulls open the door and steps inside. She lets the door  
go. In SLOW MOTION, the DOOR SWINGS SHUT, shaking the frame  
of the greenhouse.

Then, like a deadly dewdrop, the loose PANE OF GLASS FALLS OUT  
OF ITS GRID... SAILING DOWN TOWARD THE CHILD.. At the last  
moment, Emma sees the FLYING GLASS headed for her. She  
SCREAMS.....

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Pearl sits in a dingy corridor, staring ahead with dazed  
exhaustion. Bart walks down the hall and stands beside her.

BART

Peyton says that Joe fell right  
off to sleep.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A long, uncomfortable beat.

PEARL  
I know what you're thinking.

No response.

PEARL  
It was secure, I KNOW it was.

Bart shuts his eyes tightly, as if seeing something.

BART  
I should NEVER have let you build  
that thing by yourself.

PEARL  
Bart, that glass was secure--

BART  
Cut it out, Pearl.

PEARL  
I'm telling you, there's NO WAY  
it could just FALL--

BART  
JUST CUT IT OUT!

Pearl reacts as if she's been slapped. A nearby door swings open. A DOCTOR walks out. Pearl stands feebly.

DOCTOR  
She's lost a lot of blood, but  
she's going to be alright.

BART  
Thank God.

DOCTOR  
We're very lucky. The glass just  
missed her aorta, and that would  
have been, well, much worse..

Pearl slumps a bit against Bart.

EXT. BARTEL HOUSE - DAY

Bart, Pearl and Emma pull up in the family car. Peyton runs out to greet them. Emma wears a hefty bandage and a sling. Her face lights up when she sees Peyton.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pearl watches as Peyton puts her arm around Emma and leads her inside.

INT. DININGROOM - NIGHT

The family eats dinner in silence. Emma wears her bandage. Bart and Pearl exchange a look.

BART

Emma, we have to talk about something. The Policemen sent Solomon home from the hospital last week. Now if you see Solomon around the house or at school, we want you to tell us, understand?

EMMA

Yes Daddy.

PEARL

Emma, we want...

PEYTON

(interrupting)

You're safe. We don't want you to worry about that.

Pearl reacts to the interruption. She glares at Peyton.

EMMA

I'm not worried. I like Solomon.

Peyton brings a forkful of food to her mouth. Pearl catches sight of her GARNET BRACELET, sparkling on Peyton's wrist.

PEARL

Is that my bracelet, Peyton?

Peyton looks up innocently.

PEYTON

Yes, Pearl.

PEARL

Have you been going through my private things?

PEYTON

I thought --

PEARL

You thought what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEYTON  
I thought you told me I could wear  
it anytime.

Peyton takes the bracelet off and sweetly hands it to Pearl.

PEYTON  
I'm sorry. I must have  
misunderstood.

Bart shoots Pearl a dirty look. Emma stares down at her plate.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darkness. Pearl and Bart lie in bed. Pearl is wide awake.

PEARL  
Maybe we can replan our trip after  
Emma's fully recovered..

BART  
We could turn it into a family  
vacation and take Emma and Joe.  
Having Peyton along would help out  
a lot.

Beat.

PEARL  
I'm getting a little.. tired of  
Peyton.

BART  
Well it's a good thing she's  
around, considering all that's  
happened lately.

PEARL  
What do you mean by that?  
(voice rising)  
You mean to take care of the things  
I can't?

BART  
I didn't say that Pearl.

She sits up in bed.

PEARL  
I don't want her working here  
anymore. Ever since she arrived  
things have gone wrong.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BART  
So Peyton's responsible for Emma's accident? I suppose Solomon was her fault too.

PEARL  
I know it sounds ridiculous...

BART  
It sounds paranoid and petty, Pearl. That's not like you.

PEARL  
You don't see it, Bart. She's out to get me.

Bart's had enough.

BART  
Out to get you? Let me tell you something. Before you decided you wanted to go out of town, we were planning a surprise party for you on our anniversary. Marlene and I had already made up the guest list.

PEARL  
Party?....

BART  
And whose idea was it? Who galvanized the whole thing, getting me and Marlene involved? Peyton. She cares about you, honey, if you'd just give her a chance.

Long beat.

PEARL  
I...I don't know what to believe anymore.

There is a loud CLANK from downstairs.

BART  
Now what.

Bart throws off the covers.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bart comes noiselessly down the stairs and into the doorway to the kitchen. He stops in his tracks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Peyton stands in the dark kitchen wearing a transparent, sexy nightgown. She bends in front of the open icebox, the light from which illuminates the outlines of her naked body.

Bart stands quietly a long moment, watching her. She appears not to notice he's there.

Then Peyton straightens, and very slowly turns until she faces Bart. The icebox remains open, frost escaping into the room. She stares at Bart a long moment, eyes never wavering.

BART  
I...I heard something.

PEYTON  
I dropped something.

BART  
Oh, well, okay. Goodnight.

PEYTON  
Can I get you anything?

BART  
What? Oh. No thanks.

Peyton takes a step forward.

PEYTON  
You're welcome to anything you want, you know.

Bart stumbles backward.

BART  
Thanks anyway, I better-

Bart turns and is gone. Peyton stares after him.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Darkness. Bart lies in bed looking at the ceiling. Pearl sleeps beside him. He rolls over and nuzzles her neck.

Bart hungrily kisses her. He turns Pearl on her back, pulls up her nightgown and covers her chest and belly with kisses. He is violent in his passion. Pearl groans.

PEARL  
I've missed you...

INT. NURSERY - DAY

A ROW OF BLUE TURTLES pasted onto a wall. Peyton stands on a ladder, wallpapering the trim along the ceiling. She is covered in plaster. Pearl enters and stops in shock.

PEARL  
What's going on?

Peyton looks down at Pearl.

PEYTON  
Aren't the turtles great? And I have an idea for the back yard. A miniature house for Joe and Emma, with little tables and chairs inside. And the big bad wolf coming down the chimney.

PEARL  
You should have asked me about this before you started, Peyton.

PEYTON  
Bart said he liked it. I'm sorry if you disagree.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Marlene paces behind her desk, speaking into a dictaphone.

MARLENE  
And if there are further services that I or my staff might provide, please do not hesitate to call blah blah blah.

Her ASSISTANT, a YOUNG MAN with no shoulders, KNOCKS and enters. He carries an envelope which he puts on her desk.

ASSISTANT  
The new listings notice.

Marlene opens it while standing and leafs through it.

MARLENE  
Most of these are old... Rosen, Pentel...

CLOSE UP on listing notice. A list of names, prices, and addresses, followed by a small, grainy photograph of the property. The fourth name on the list is MOTT. Marlene's finger stops there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARLENE

Dr. Richard Mott. I'll be damned.

Marlene slowly sits down, studying the MOTT ENTRY. Then her eyes squint. In the photograph of the Mott home, hanging near the front door, is the ROOSTER WIND CHIME WITH THE HEART SHAPED BELLS.

MARLENE

The wind chime....

She looks up. The Assistant still stands in front her.

MARLENE

What are you waiting for, a tip?

He scurries out. Marlene CIRCLES THE CHIME IN BLACK PEN and picks up the phone.

INT. BARTEL LIVINGROOM - DAY

The phone RINGS. Peyton, still covered with plaster, picks it up. Behind her, through the window, Pearl is visible working in the back yard.

PEYTON

Hello?

INTERCUT MARLENE AND PEYTON

MARLENE

Let me talk to Pearl.

PEYTON

May I ask who's calling?

MARLENE

It's Marlene Craven. Want me to spell it?

PEYTON

Pearl's not here.

MARLENE

Of course she isn't. Let me ask you something Peyton... what was your last name again?

PEYTON

Flanders.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARLENE

Ah yes. Where did you get that lovely wind chime with the rooster? I wanted to pick one up.

PEYTON

I don't remember. I'll tell Pearl you called.

MARLENE

You're too kind.

Peyton hangs up the phone.

INT. MARLENE'S OFFICE - DAY

Marlene paces and smokes while speaking on the phone.

MARLENE

How long do symposiums take? (Beat)  
Okay okay. Just tell Dr. Bartel to call Marlene.

Marlene hangs up and grabs her purse.

INT. ASSISTANT'S STATION - DAY

Marlene strides up to the desk, shrugging on a jacket. The Assistant stands to attention.

MARLENE

Very important. I'm going to the library. I want you to call Pearl Bartel and keep on trying until she gets home. I mean every fifteen minutes. Tell her to meet me at Rudy's as soon as she can. Tell her..no, I don't want to scare her. Tell her to bring the baby. And watch out if that bitch nanny answers the phone. Don't tell her you're from my office.

Marlene turns and heads for the elevator.

ASSISTANT

What should I say?

MARLENE

Make something up. You've got a Harvard education.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Pearl walks in from the back yard and takes off her gloves. Peyton is unloading the dishwasher. The phone RINGS. THEY LOCK EYES. Peyton moves toward it....

PEYTON  
I'll....

PEARL  
I've got it.

Pearl answers the phone.

PEARL  
Hello?

INTERCUT MARLENE'S ASSISTANT AND PEARL

ASSISTANT  
Hello. Is.. Pearl Bartel there?

PEARL  
Speaking.

ASSISTANT  
Um... Are you sure?

PEARL  
Of course I'm sure. Who is this?

Peyton casually walks out of the room.

ASSISTANT  
This is Eddie Pons, Marlene Craven's Executive Assistant. Marlene wants you to meet her at Rudy's as soon as you can. She said to bring the baby. It's important.

PEARL  
The baby? Let me talk to her.

ASSISTANT  
She's not here. She's at the library.

PEARL  
What's this about?

ASSISTANT  
I..don't know. She was very upset.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL

And you have no idea what this is about?

ASSISTANT

She did say something about a wind chime. I don't know if that means anything...

PEARL

Thanks.

Pearl hangs up the phone. Through the foyer window, the CHIME is visible, swaying in the breeze....

INT. HALL - DAY

Peyton slowly hangs up the telephone. She wrings her hands..twisting her pinky finger back and forth...

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

Marlene parks her MAROON JAGUAR in the parking lot. She gets out of the car and heads for the front steps of the library.

INT. NURSERY - DAY

Peyton changes Joe's diaper. Pearl enters and stands in the doorway. Beat.

PEARL

I'm going to take Joe out for a while.

Peyton stops and looks up.

PEYTON

It's time for his nap.

PEARL

I know. I'm taking him out..

PEYTON

Suit yourself.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Marlene sits down in front of a screen. She starts going through a roll of microfiche. Pages of newspaper articles...

EXT. BARTEL HOUSE - DAY

Pearl nervously straps Joe into the baby car seat.

PEARL  
I know you're sleepy,  
sweetheart..That's a good boy...

Pearl gets into the driver's seat and pulls away with a SCREECH.

As soon as she is out of sight, Peyton exits the front door and moves rapidly down the steps..

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Slowly, slowly Marlene turns the microfilm pages, concentrating...

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

Peyton drives slowly into the parking lot, scanning the rows of cars.. Then she sees it: The MAROON JAGUAR. Peyton pulls into a parking space. She gets out of her car. IN HER ARMS IS A ROLL OF TWINE AND A PAIR OF SCISSORS....

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE - DAY

"Rudy's Cafe" written on an awning. Pearl enters, carrying Joe in her arms. She sits down at a table.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Marlene rubs her eyes. She continues turning the pages.. Until there it is: A PICTURE OF THE MOTT FUNERAL. And the WIDOW, standing in the front row, wearing sunglasses and looking very pregnant....is PEYTON. No mistake.

MARLENE  
Fucking A.

Marlene bolts from her chair.

INT. LIBRARY PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Marlene enters and SLAMS a quarter into the phone. Dials quickly.

MARLENE  
It's me. Did you reach her? Okay.  
I'm on my way.

INT. LIBRARY CORRIDOR - DAY

Marlene's pumps CLICK loudly on the stone floor. She walks quickly, down the hall and out the wide front doors...

We travel slowly upwards, along the carved library wall, to the second floor balcony: PEYTON LEANS ON THE RAILING, WATCHING MARLENE'S EXIT. On her face is the slightest hint of a smile....

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Marlene moves swiftly to the Jaguar. She opens the door, slides inside, and pulls out with a SCREECH.

INT. MARLENE'S CAR - DAY

Marlene drives with the intensity of a New York cabbie. She HONKS at somebody in her way.

MARLENE

Are you kidding me?! You're kidding me, right?

Then we see it. Trailing from the back of the lighter, taped underneath the dash, is a FUSE.

WE FOLLOW the fuse as it runs under the carpet, beneath the seats, and out a tiny opening in the back passenger window.

EXT. CAR - DAY

From the crack in the window, the fuse is taped to the outside of the car, and runs directly into...THE GAS TANK.

INT. CAR - DAY

MARLENE

This is a nightmare.

Marlene reaches into her bag and rummages a moment. She brings out a pack of cigarettes and hits one out onto the seat.

Marlene PUSHES THE LIGHTER IN. She stops at a red light, the unlit cigarette hanging out of her mouth. She glances up at the rear view window and straightens a stray wisp of hair.

CLOSE ON THE LIGHTER, heating up. Then a LOUD POP. Marlene looks down.

The FUSE IS LIT.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IT RUNS AT HIGH SPEED FROM THE LIGHTER ALONG ITS DEADLY PATH.

Surprised, Marlene follows it for a moment with her eyes. Then SHE REALIZES. She makes a move for the door, but...

EXT. STREET - DAY

Marlene's car explodes into a BALL OF FIRE.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Pearl sits at the cafe calming Joe, who CRIES irritably. She looks up and down the street.

EXT. BARTEL HOUSE - DAY

Peyton pulls up to the house. She gets out of the car.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Pearl takes a sip from an iced tea. She checks her watch.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Peyton walks calmly into the kitchen and opens a cabinet. Inside is an INHALER among assorted spices. Peyton takes the inhaler and gives it little SQUEEZES, letting the aerosol medication escape.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Peyton squeezes out the medication from another of Pearl's inhalers. She squeezes one last time. The small tube is EMPTY.

Peyton leans down and places the inhaler back into the open drawer. Peyton closes the drawer with her hip.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

The iced tea is empty. Pearl stands. She throws a five dollar bill onto the table and leaves.

INT. BARTEL FOYER - DAY

A key in the lock and Pearl enters with Joe. She drops her purse on a table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL  
Anybody home?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Pearl enters and puts a sleeping Joe into his basinet. She picks up the phone, and dials a number.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Peyton quietly opens the door. She reaches into Pearl's purse, takes out her INHALER, and puts it in her pocket.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Pearl stands, the phone to her ear.

PEARL  
Marlene Craven's line, please...

PEYTON (O.S.)  
Hello, Pearl.

Pearl jumps. She quickly hangs up the telephone.

PEARL  
Oh! You scared me...

PEYTON  
I see you haven't heard the news.

PEARL  
News?

PEYTON  
Marlene's dead.

Pearl's breath starts coming faster.

PEARL  
Dead?...

PEYTON  
Blown up.

Pearl stumbles backwards.

PEARL  
Can't breathe...

INT. FOYER - DAY

Pearl grabs and empties out her purse onto the floor, rifles through its contents. No inhaler.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Pearl tears into the room and heads for the nighttable. Her WHEEZING is considerably worse.

She quickly opens the drawer, finds the INHALER, and puts it to her lips with relief, takes a deep breath.... Pearl's eyes open wide in PANIC. It's empty. She drops it and runs from the room.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Pearl rips open the medicine cabinet. Bottles fall out onto the floor.

She finds an inhaler and puts it to her mouth... EMPTY!

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Pearl takes the inhaler from the spice cabinet. She holds it out in front of her and squeezes. Nothing.

Pearl staggers toward the back door, unable to breath.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

Pearl collapses onto the ground, her hands clutching at her chest.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Through the livingroom window, among white gauze curtains, Peyton watches, the baby in her arms.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

The sound of steady RAIN. A BLUR of noises and color, gradually dissolving into Bart's face.

BART

She's awake. Pearl? Can you hear me?

Pearl tries to speak. She is hooked up to a respirator and cannot. Bart strokes her forehead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BART

That's okay, baby. You don't have to say anything. Rest.

A Doctor presses through and checks Pearl's eyes with a small light. He steps back.

DOCTOR

I'll be back to check on you later, Pearl. You're going to be fine. Bart, can I have a word with you outside?

BART

Pearl, I'm going to step outside.

Pearl grabs Bart's arm. Urgency in her eyes. She points to a pad on the bedstand. Bart gives it to her. She scribbles: "Marlene". Shows it to Bart. Bart squeezes the bridge of his nose very hard.

BART

Pearl, baby. I have something to tell you.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - NIGHT

Peyton sits with Joe on her lap and Emma beside her. Emma leans against Peyton, very upset.

EMMA

So.. so what happens to the little girl if the Mommy doesn't come home with her?

PEYTON

Well, the little girl will be okay because so many other ladies want to be her new Mommy.

EMMA

I want you to be my new Mommy, Peyton.

Bart approaches. Peyton stands, her expression the picture of grave concern. Bart scoops Emma into his arms.

BART

Mommy's going to be just fine. She's going to stay here a little while.

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CONTINUED:

PEYTON  
Thank God.

BART  
Let's go home.

Bart moves to the lobby doors, Emma still in his arms. Peyton follows with Joe. A NURSE holds the door open.

NURSE  
What a beautiful family.

BART  
Uh.. Thank you.

He walks through. Peyton's a step behind, beaming.

INT. NURSERY - NIGHT

A loud CLAP of thunder. Hard rain against the window. Peyton gently puts Joe into his crib.

PEYTON  
That's my baby.

INT. EMMA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Emma lies in her bed with her doll. Peyton sits near her.

PEYTON  
(singing)  
Beautiful beautiful brown eyes,  
beautiful beautiful brown eyes,  
I'll never love blue eyes again.

Emma is asleep. Peyton kisses her and turns off the light.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Bart sits at a desk writing. Peyton enters quietly. She holds the lightbulb in her hand.

PEYTON  
Bart. Sorry to disturb you. Are there any lightbulbs in the garage? Mine's out.

Bart looks up.

BART  
I think there are.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They both look to the window. Rain POUNDS against it.

PEYTON  
Guess it's best to wait until  
tomorrow...

Bart stands. Stretches.

BART  
Nah that's okay. I need a break  
anyway.

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

Bart makes a run for it across the wet grass. The rain pours down in angry sheets.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Bart enters, out of breath and wet. He turns on a hanging bulb. It swings soft light through the room. He squints, looking around for the lightbulbs. Then suddenly he sees her.

Peyton stands in the doorway, dripping wet, her nipples showing through the wet cotton of her tee shirt.

PEYTON  
Need help?

BART  
Uh.. I think they're up there.

Bart points to an upper shelf.

PEYTON  
Here. If you pick me up I'll be  
able to reach it.

She turns her back to him and lifts her right arm. Bart hesitates. Then he puts his arms around her hips and hoists her upwards.

PEYTON (O.S.)  
A little more. More. Okay. Got  
it.

Bart lets Peyton slide downwards slowly. He ends up with his hands around her chest, his face in her wet hair. Their bodies press together, front to back.

Peyton turns to face him. A long beat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BART  
 (horse whisper)  
 Peyton.

Their faces are inches apart.

BART  
 I've never been unfaithful...

Peyton slowly licks the rain from Bart's cheek. She pauses, then runs her tongue over his other cheek.

PEYTON  
 You won't have to be.

Gently Peyton pulls away and runs back out into the rain. Bart looks out after her. He shuts his eyes tightly.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Bart takes a brisk shower. He turns off the running water and grabs a towel, wraps it around himself.

Bart walks to the sink, leans onto the counter and looks in the mirror a long beat. Then he reaches for his toothbrush.. and sees it sitting on the counter. PEYTON HAS PUT TOOTHPASTE ON IT FOR HIM. He quickly looks over his shoulder.. No trace of her.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Bart's car pulls up outside the house. Pearl stares out the window. Bart helps her out of the passenger seat.

Behind them, near the neighbor's bushes, SOLOMON'S NEW RED BICYCLE is visible, leaning against a tree.

INT. FOYER/LIVINGROOM - DAY

Pearl enters, looking around the rooms. She notices that the PAPERWEIGHT has been placed back on the coffee table. Bart stands behind her.

BART  
 Here. Let me take your purse.

He reaches out for it but Pearl holds on.

PEARL  
 I'm not an invalid.

Peyton appears at the foot of the stairs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEYTON  
Hello, Pearl. So glad to have you  
home.

Pearl's smile is pure sugar.

PEARL  
So glad to find you here.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Pearl lies in bed. She stares up at the ceiling. Peyton enters with a tray of food. She places it in front of Pearl.

PEYTON  
Lunchtime.

Pearl eyes the food. Says nothing.

PEYTON  
Aren't you hungry?

No response. Peyton stiffens.

PEYTON  
Suit yourself.

She turns and leaves the room. Pearl watches her go. As soon as the door closes, she throws the sheets aside.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Pearl walks rapidly to the door, shrugging on a jacket as she goes. Peyton runs up behind her, grabs her arm.

PEYTON  
Wait a minute. Where are you  
going?

PEARL  
Out.

Pearl eyes her arm. Peyton lets go.

PEYTON  
Bart told me specifically not to  
let you out of bed--

PEARL  
Then I guess you're in trouble.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Elevator doors open. Pearl walks out of them, heads right.

INT. MARLENE'S OFFICE - DAY

Marlene's Assistant lets Pearl into Marlene's office with a key.

ASSISTANT  
Please hurry. I'm not supposed  
to let you do this--

PEARL  
Just give me five minutes.

The Assistant leaves, closing the door behind him. Pearl walks to Marlene's desk. There is a framed photograph of Marlene and Marty together on a ski vacation. Next to it, a picture of Pearl, Bart and a younger Emma. Pearl stares at them a moment, then shakes herself into action.

EXT. HALLWAY - DAY

The Assistant waits outside the door, checking his watch. He swings open the door.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Pearl looks up, frustrated.

ASSISTANT  
I can't let you stay here any  
longer.

Pearl throws a stack of papers onto the desk.

PEARL  
I'm not getting anywhere anyway..

Then she sees, on a piece of paper thrown loose by the toss:  
the word MOTT, underlined.

Pearl pulls MARLENE'S LISTING NOTICE out of the stack. Within the "Mott" entry, the BLURRED IMAGE OF THE ROOSTER WIND CHIME IS CIRCLED IN BLACK. Pearl squints in disbelief.

PEARL  
Was Marlene selling Dr. Richard  
Mott a property?

ASSISTANT  
(impatient)  
I don't think so.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pearl walks rapidly to the door with the listing notice.

PEARL  
Thanks for the look.

ASSISTANT  
You can't take stuff out of here--

PEARL  
Sue me.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Late afternoon sun. Pearl pulls up in front of a well-kept home with a "FOR SALE" sign in front. She checks the number of the house against the listing notice on the front seat.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Pearl walks to the front door.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Mrs. Boyajian! Is that you?

Pearl turns. An out of breath, overweight WOMAN runs toward her, arms extended.

PEARL  
I'm not... I was just driving by.

The Woman sizes Pearl up. Big smile. Shakes her hand.

WOMAN  
Betty Silverman, Sy and Co. You  
want a look? This house is a STEAL.  
You're lucky. I was just leaving.

Betty fishes for the keys.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Bright, airy, and completely EMPTY. Pearl enters. Looks around. Betty is right behind her.

BETTY  
Gorgeous marble. From Italy.

PEARL  
Can I take a look upstairs?

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Empty. Spacious. Pearl peers into the closets.

BETTY  
They're VERY ANXIOUS to sell. Could  
I get you a deal...

PEARL  
Is there a nursery?

INT. NURSERY - DAY

Pearl walks into a small empty room. Betty on her heels.

BETTY  
Well appointed, isn't it?

Pearl is transfixed. She is staring at the wall along the ceiling, covered with...

A neat row of giant TURTLES.

CLOSE ON Pearl's face.

BETTY (O.S.)  
Do you have children? Because  
there's an adorable bonus in the  
back yard...

Pearl slowly looks over at Betty.

PEARL  
A play house. Small tables and  
chairs. And the big bad wolf  
coming down the chimney.

BETTY  
You've seen the house already! Hey,  
wait up....

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Pearl exits the front door, walking quickly. Faster, faster down the driveway. Pearl breaks into a run, jumps into her car. Pearl SCREECHES away from the curb.

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Peyton carries a steaming bowl from the kitchen and sets it on the table. She looks to Bart and Emma who sit around the table smelling the food. He shrugs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BART  
Might as well start...

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Pearl's car goes FLYING over a bump... And SMASHES back down onto the pavement.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Dinner's underway. They look like the perfect family.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Pearl's car pulls up into the driveway. She gets out and runs for the front door, leaving the car door open.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Pearl enters. Her eyes are wild, her hair a mess.

BART (O.S.)  
Pearl? That you?

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Pearl appears in the doorway. Bart and Emma look up.

BART  
Pearl. Are you alright?

Pearl walks steadily towards Peyton. Slowly, Peyton turns to face her.

BART  
Here. Let me help you.

Bart stands. Pearl doesn't even look at him.

PEARL  
(firm)  
Sit down, Bart.

Bart sits. Pearl is getting closer and closer to Peyton. Peyton stands.

PEYTON  
Pearl. You don't look at all well.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Peyton backs slightly around the table. Pearl pursues her.

PEARL  
Maybe I should see a doctor. Know  
of any?

BART  
Pearl, I really think-

PEARL  
Shut up Bart.

PEYTON  
Is this necessary, Pearl?

PEARL  
You tell me. Don't you know best?

They are standing almost face to face now. Pearl looks over at Bart and Emma, who stare back at her as if she were an intruder. Pearl hesitates. Peyton senses the weakness. She reaches out to gently take her arm.

PEYTON  
Here, why don't you sit down---

PEARL  
Not this time.

Pearl turns back to Peyton. She stares at her a moment. Pearl's lip curls. Her arm reaches back.

PEARL  
You're fired.

Pearl PUNCHES Peyton full in the jaw, sending her flying backwards onto the table.

BART  
Pearl! My God!

Peyton lands like a main course in front of Bart and Emma. Emma SCREAMS. Joe can be heard through the intercom, CRYING upstairs.

PEARL  
She's Dr. Mott's widow.

Peyton springs to her feet, holding her jaw. Her face contorts with rage.

PEYTON  
YOU OWE ME!!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Pearl shakes out her hand from the punch.

BART

Emma. Go on up to your room.

Emma runs upstairs. Pearl walks to the front door. Opens it.

PEARL

Get out of my house.

They lock eyes for a long moment.

Slowly, slowly, Peyton walks to Pearl and stands face to face with her. She leans in close, as if for a kiss.

PEYTON

Game's not over.

PEARL

You know where to find me.

And Peyton is gone.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BARTEL HOUSE - DAY

A POLICE CAR is parked in the driveway. The YELLOW SCHOOL BUS pulls to a stop. Pearl runs out the front door with Emma. She kneels in front of her as she zips up her jacket.

PEARL

Remember to go home with Diane after school. I'll be by to pick you up after dinner, okay?

Emma nods. She gives Pearl a frightened hug. Pearl holds her tightly by the shoulders.

PEARL

Everything's going to be okay. I'm going to make sure of it.

EMMA

I love you Mommy.

PEARL

I love you too, sweetheart.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A burly Policeman, DETECTIVE OLSON, stands and shakes Pearl's hand. Bart stands by her side, his arm around her. Olson heads for the door.

BART  
You'll let us know if you.. find her?

OLSON  
As I said, we expect she's long gone by now, but we'll let you know if we hear different. In the meantime I'll have one of my men stationed here for the next few days..

BART  
Thank you, Detective.

OLSON  
Let me know if you come across anything new around the house.

PEARL  
Of course.

Olson leaves. Bart turns to Pearl.

BART  
How are you doing?

PEARL  
I'm okay.

Pearl is staring out the window at her greenhouse. Bart watches. Beat. He walks to her.

BART  
Pearl. I'm so sorry.

PEARL  
I know you are, honey.

He wraps his arms tightly around her.

BART  
I'm the luckiest man in the world to have you, Angel.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Bart sits in his car, the window rolled down. Pearl stands beside him holding Joe in her arms.

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CONTINUED:

BART  
You'll call if you need anything.

PEARL  
Yes. We've been through this ten times.

Bart gestures at their driveway. A plain clothes POLICEMAN sits in his car listening to the radio.

BART  
That Cop isn't moving all day.

PEARL  
Yes yes yes.

BART  
I'm nervous about leaving you, Pearl.

Pearl leans down and looks into Bart's eyes a moment.

PEARL  
I can take care of it.

BART  
Come here.

Pearl leans in. They share a long, sexy kiss.

PEARL  
Now get going. I've got things to do.

BART  
I'll call at lunch.

Pearl watches Bart drive off. As soon as he turns the corner, she turns and takes the stairs two at a time.

INT. HALL CLOSET - DAY

Pearl stands on a stepstool, looking for something on the top shelf. She reappears, an old TAPE RECORDER in her hands.

INT. NURSERY - DAY

Pearl wraps Joe in a YELLOW BLANKET. She kisses his head and carries him out of the room.

## INT. GREENHOUSE - DAY

Pearl stands on a ladder in front of the door fastening the MALLET at both ends with a rope. The rope at the head of the mallet is threaded through a hole in the roof. Once it is let go or cut, the mallet will swing down, into the door. Pearl hops off the ladder and stands back to look at it.

CLOSE ON NAILS being loaded into an XL101 STUD DRIVER. Pearl's fingers work quickly and nimbly.

CLOSE ON a NICKEL CADMIUM BATTERY being SNAPPED onto the Stud Driver.

CLOSE ON Pearl's hands, putting on GLOVES.

CLOSE ON Pearl's waist. She wraps a workman's HOLSTER around her and fastens it like a belt. Her hand places the Stud Driver in the holster. Pearl's hand reaches into her back pocket. She brings out an INHALER. Beat.

CLOSE ON scrap can of garbage. The inhaler is thrown in.

## EXT. STREET - DAY

Slowly, a car pulls to a stop. The door opens. A cowboy boot steps out.

## EXT. STREET - DAY

The plain clothes POLICEMAN gets out of the car and stretches. He reaches into his breast pocket, brings out a pack of Camels. Hits one out. The Policeman brings a tattered book of matches from his pocket, cups his hands, and....GRUNTS loudly, falling forward into Pearl's bushes, writhing.

Standing over him, holding a BLOODY KNIFE, is PEYTON. On the left side of her jaw is a greenish purple bruise. She leans forward, pulls back his head by the hair, and slits his throat. Peyton wipes off the knife on the Policeman's shirt and looks up at the Bartel home.

PEYTON'S POV of the Bartel house. It stands quiet, solid, almost sinister....She looks up at it, her eyes black as ice.

## INT. LABORATORY - DAY

Bart stands next to a technician, half-heartedly checking a page of data. He squeezes the bridge of his nose.

TECHNICIAN

You okay? You haven't been here all day.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BART  
Yeah I'm fine.

Bart checks his watch.

BART  
Excuse me a moment.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The door swings open slowly...

INT. NURSERY - DAY

Peyton steps inside. UNDER THE BLANKET IN THE CRIB LIES THE BABY, SLEEPING. The room is filled with warm sunlight, and the mobile over the bed turns slightly, pushed by a breeze.

Peyton walks quietly to the crib and gently lifts the bundle toward her breast. But turning the bundle around, we see that it is EMMA'S PLASTIC DOLL. The long eyelashes and painted plastic face look up at Peyton in a grotesque smile.

Peyton RIPS OFF the doll's head and THROWS IT across the room.

Then, with a quiet TINKLE, the SOUND OF JOE'S CRYING floats into the room. Peyton freezes. She leans out the window. The CRYING IS COMING FROM PEARL'S GREENHOUSE. Peyton turns and runs from the room. The doll's head, flung against the back wall, smiles to itself.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Peyton walks toward the greenhouse, holding the knife. The greenhouse walls, lined with ribbed fiberglass, are opaque. From inside the house, a phone is RINGING.

INT. BART'S OFFICE - DAY

Bart sits at his desk, a phone to his ear. No answer from the other end. Bart slowly hangs it up, worry on his face. He sits a moment staring. Then he jumps up, grabs his coat....

EXT/INT. GREENHOUSE

Peyton slowly opens the greenhouse door. It CREAKS loudly...She peers in. Just inside, resting on a chair, Peyton sees a RUNNING TAPE RECORDER PLAYING JOE'S CRYING.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Before she has time to react, a MALLET COMES FLYING DOWN FROM ABOVE the door, knocking her to the ground. The knife is thrown across the yard.

Peyton sits up. Blood drips down in a steady trickle from a cut above her eye. She touches it and tastes the blood.

Slowly PEARL STEPS OUT FROM BEHIND THE GREENHOUSE. Cool. Hard. Hands on hips. When Peyton sees Pearl in her "gear", she laughs. Pearl stands firm.

PEARL  
The baby stays, Peyton.

Peyton stops laughing and scrambles to her feet.

PEYTON  
You little self-righteous liar!

PEARL  
I'm sorry for what happened to you.  
But it wasn't my fault.

PEYTON  
Not you fault? Spreading your  
thighs, egging him on, then running  
home and crying rape to daddy? I've  
always hated teasing sluts like  
you!

Peyton slowly walks towards Pearl.

PEARL  
Stop right there...

PEYTON  
You're in the way, Pearl. Don't  
you see that? This is my family now.

Pearl whips the STUD DRIVER from her holster and points it at Peyton.

PEARL  
Don't come any closer.

PEYTON  
When your daughter cries out in  
the night, she calls my name. And  
when your man does it to you, he  
sees my face. Your baby gets his  
milk from me.

Peyton takes another step towards her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PEARL  
I'll shoot!

PEYTON  
You're all dried up, Pearl. It's  
over.

PEYTON walks toward Pearl. Pearl hesitates, she can't shoot. With a smile Peyton charges, kicking the gun from her hand, throwing Pearl to the ground.

INT. MOVING CAR - DAY

Bart sits in traffic, anxiously pounding the dash with his fingertips.

EXT. YARD - DAY

The two women roll on the ground toward the greenhouse, biting and hitting each other. Peyton TWISTS PEARL'S EAR as hard as she can and gets the upper hand, straddling her.

PEYTON  
You know what your man whispers  
in my ear when he's coming, Pearl?  
He says, "Peyton... you're my  
Angel.."

Pearl stops struggling. Peyton laughs. A beat.

PEARL  
You're a liar!

Pearl punches out at Peyton. Peyton reaches up and grabs the MALLET from its rope. She holds the mallet over Pearl's head and then BRINGS IT DOWN. Pearl rolls out of the way just in time.

Peyton throws the mallet aside and stands. She starts running for the house. Pearl lunges at her legs. Peyton falls.

PEARL  
Noooooo!

Peyton grabs a bunch of Pearl's hair, pulling her head backwards. Pearl's eyes tear with pain. Still she hangs on.

PEARL  
No.

PEYTON  
You're in my way!!!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Peyton punches Pearl as hard as she can in the jaw. Pearl lets go, senseless. Peyton stands. Bleeding badly from her forehead, she limps toward the house.

INT. KITCHEN/LIVINGROOM - DAY

Peyton opens the back door and limps heavily through the rooms. She runs her hand along a table top, sending picture frames and a lamp CRASHING loudly to the floor.

PEYTON

Come on out! I know you're in here!

Peyton is quiet a moment, listening for a cry.. Nothing. And then THE SOUND OF A CAR PULLING UP IN FRONT. Peyton quickly looks around the room.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Bart gets out of the car and runs up the front stairs.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Bart opens the door, steps inside.

BART

Pearl-- Oh dear God.

The livingroom ahead is trashed. A thin trail of blood runs along the carpet. Utter quiet reigns. Bart steps forward slowly, his footfalls CRUNCHING on broken glass. Each doorway, each crevice he passes holds the promise of someone lying in wait...

PEYTON (O.S.)

Bart.

BART JUMPS AND TURNS. Peyton stands in the doorway to the hall, bloody and bruised.

BART

Where is Pearl.

Peyton limps toward him, her face sweet and vulnerable, her hands behind her back....

PEYTON

Oh Bart it was horrible. She tried to kill me.. Bart hold me...

Bart's eyes narrow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BART  
Game's over, Peyton.

Peyton's face contorts in fury. She lets out a STEADY BANSHEE'S SCREAM and FLIES toward Bart, a PAIR OF SCISSORS held up in the air.

Bart stops Peyton's lunge with his forearm. He KNEES HER in the belly and THROWS HER against the wall. She slumps down, apparently out cold. Bart walks quickly toward the kitchen.

BART  
(panic in voice)  
Pearl! Pearl! Please....

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Bart enters the kitchen, looks around quickly.

BART  
Pearl!!!

The utility closet door is slightly ajar. With dread he walks to it and peers inside....

PEYTON (O.S.)  
AHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!

From behind Bart, Peyton FLIES out of nowhere and FLINGS the PAPERWEIGHT at his head. BAM! Bart goes down.

The sound of a THIN BABY'S CRY comes from upstairs. Peyton steps over Bart and ascends the stairs.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Pearl rouses herself. Clearly in great pain, bleeding from her ear, she stands and moves toward the house. A force deep within her pushes her forward.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The FAINT CRYING stops. Peyton limps down the hallway, opening doors as she goes.

PEYTON  
Red rover red rover!

A linen closet. Nothing. The master bedroom. Nothing. Peyton stands, the doors all around her swung open.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEYTON

Where are you!?

Peyton HITS the wall in frustration. The CRYING begins again. Peyton looks up toward the sound and sees: A PULLDOWN STRAP FOR AN ATTIC DOOR.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Upstairs, Peyton's shouts can be heard, growing in frustration. Pearl limps into the room and sees Bart's body on the floor. She runs to him. Bart GROANS.

PEARL

Hang on, sweetheart.

Pearl stands and moves away.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

Peyton climbs up the wooden, pull down stairs. Finally inside, she looks around. Then she smiles.

Crouched on the floor among attic debris, holding Joe, is....SOLOMON.

PEYTON

Give him over.

SOLOMON

N..n..o.

Peyton walks toward them, picking up an old LAMP as she goes.

PEYTON

Give him to me or I'll bash your skull in!

Peyton walks towards Solomon with the lamp leveled above her head. He leans down over the child, prepared to receive the blows.

PEARL (O.S.)

Stop right there!

Peyton turns. Pearl stands at the top of the stairs, the STUD DRIVER POINTED AT PEYTON. Peyton pauses, the lamp high above Solomon's head.

PEYTON

Pearl, you're beginning to get on my nerves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARL  
Move away from them. I mean it!

PEYTON  
Do you honestly think I'm going  
to let you have him? MY BABY? You  
think I can do that? Oh no. I'd  
rather see my baby dead than see  
him in your arms.

PEARL  
I'm warning you Peyton!!

PEYTON  
I'm shaking in my boots.

Peyton turns back to Solomon and Joe. She begins to bring the lamp down...

A LOUD SHOT FIRES OUT, the force throwing Pearl backward.

THE NAIL HITS PEYTON SQUARE IN THE CHEST. HER EYES OPEN IN HORROR. SHE FLIES BACKWARD, THROUGH THE GLASS WINDOW.

Pearl limps to the window and looks down.

Peyton has landed, face up, on Solomon's picket fence. Two white slats of wood have speared her body through the stomach and chest, as if offering her blood up to the sky. Peyton's dead eyes are open.

SOLOMON  
(words coming fast)  
I told her not to hurt my friends.  
She wouldn't listen. I heard the  
baby. I know I'm supposed to ask  
before I touch the baby--

Pearl takes the baby from Solomon's arms.

PEARL  
Hush now, Solomon. I want you to  
call an ambulance, understand?

Solomon nods.

PEARL  
I'm going to go take care of my  
family now.

Pearl kisses Joe. She turns and carefully walks down the attic stairs.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

LOW ANGLE

...on Peyton, who stares up at a cloudless expanse of blue.  
Behind her, the house sits strong and solid.

THE END