

A GOOD MOTHER

by Rey Howard

Story by
Rey Howard
David W. Higgins

September 28, 2007

LAUNCHPAD PRODUCTIONS
818.574.5313

INT. JOE & LACEY'S HOME - AFTERNOON

A bright Pottery Barn of a living room in an entry-level McMansion. Tasteful beiges and faux finishes abound, as do -- on this particular day -- spectacular decorations.

The room vibrates with a cheery hubbub. Dads in short sleeves bear cameras. Moms in spring colors chat busily. Children and toddlers scamper, paper crowns adorn head after head. The controlled chaos of a child's birthday party.

In front of the mayhem is LACEY. In her early- to mid-thirties, she's blonde, trim, sexy yet accessible. Her hair, makeup, and Easter-egg-blue dress are classy, sensible. In her arms is EVA, a food-smeared one-year-old. A tiara sits crooked in the tiny girl's mussed blonde hair.

Lacey gazes into Eva's pale blue eyes. The two turn in slow circles, dancing to the music, chatting and giggling, as though each were the only other creature on Earth.

TANYA emerges from the crowd, trailed by LIAM, a boy of two.

TANYA

Lacey. Can Liam give the birthday girl a kiss? He's not... Sick or anything.

LACEY

Oh. Sure. Of course.

TANYA

Let me just...

(To LANE, standing nearby)

Honey! Lane! I want to get a picture of Liam kissing little Eva.

Lane readies his digital camera. Tanya lifts up Liam.

TANYA (CONT'D)

Okay, Liam. Kissy-kiss. Kissy-kiss Eva.

Liam leans in and wets Eva's cheek with a sticky, multi-colored mix of drool and semi-digested cupcake. Laughter bubbles out of Lacey as the camera flash goes off.

CUT TO IMAGE CAPTURED BY CAMERA.
FADE IN TITLE OVER IMAGE:

LACEY

Sunday, April 27, 2008

FADE OUT TITLE AND IMAGE.

TANYA (CONT'D)

Where's Joe?

LACEY

Oh. He'll be here later. Work work work, you know him...

TANYA

So sad, missing the princess's party.
How are you two --

LACEY

Whoops, I think her highness has a wet
diaper. Tanya, do you mind if I...

TANYA

No no! Off you go. Say bye-bye, Liam.

As Lacey slinks away, an older man makes his way through the
hubbub. ROY is a reliable-looking sort, about sixty,
aggressively cheerful, in a conservative spring plaid.

ROY

Where you going with my granddaughter?
It's time for a toast.

LACEY

Please Daddy, no toast.

ROY

It's her first birthday, I'm gonna give
her a toast. Just pretend to enjoy it,
little missy.

He tweaks Eva's nose. Goes to the front of the room.

ROY (CONT'D)

Can I please have everyone's attention?
If I could just... Everybody please...

No dice. Then, with the booming voice of experience:

ROY (CONT'D)

Eyes to the front, soldiers!

The room falls to startled order.

ROY (CONT'D)

That's more like it. Just, real quick,
thank you everybody for helping us
celebrate Eva's birthday. It's an extra
special event for us. Most of you know
she was a bit of a miracle baby -- and
that's not just doting Granddad talking.
If she'd come just a bit earlier she'd
have been an Easter miracle. But hell,
she was early enough already, wasn't she.

Lacey gives a conflicted smile.

ROY (CONT'D)

So please join me in a toast to my
beautiful granddaughter Eva, and daughter
Lacey. I love you both. More than
anything in the world. To Eva and Lacey.

The crowd responds in kind. Then, to Lacey, softly:

ROY (CONT'D)
Don't ever say never, honey.

Roy gives an exuberant signal to someone in the back of the room. The lights go dim. Roy begins to sing:

ROY (CONT'D)
Happy Birthday to you...

A YOUNG FATHER carries in a cake. LORETTA, in her sixties, supervises fussily, as if she herself had given birth to the thing moments before. Her excessive care is understandable: The cake is an elaborate, three-dimensional, exquisitely decorated creation, in the form of a mother holding her baby.

CROWD
... Happy Birthday to you,
Happy Birthday dear Eva,
Happy Birthday to you.

The singing frightens Eva. She begins to cry. The young father sets the cake down in front of Lacey.

LACEY
(To Loretta)
But we have cupcakes...

ROY
Everyone needs a birthday cake. Now
enough jawing already. Blow it out!

LACEY
All right, all right. Ready Eva?

Eva continues to cry.

LACEY (CONT'D)
Come on honey, make a wish...
(Whispering)
Make a wish for your mommy. She loves
you so, so much...

Lacey looks up to see if Roy has his video camera ready. But catches sight of something in the back of the room.

She stares for a moment. Tears well in her eyes, illuminated by a lone flickering candle.

INT. DEVON'S APARTMENT - TWILIGHT
Sixteen months earlier, Devon's side of the story begins

The bowels of a disheveled studio apartment. On an old Formica table sits a scrawny Christmas tree. A sewing machine rests in a corner, under a pile of junk. A nearly drained bottle of scotch sits on a night stand.

The night stand is periodically shaken by the rhythmically moving bed. Some RANDOM GUY lies in the bed, on the bottom.

He's a non-threatening sort, unremarkable physically. A digital camera is looped around his wrist.

DEVON rides him in a graceless stupor. She's nineteen but looks younger. She's sloppy, sweaty, drunk as a sailor. And attractive even in her current state.

She's half-asleep, her eyes barely open. Yet her posture and attitude are dominant. She grinds her body into his. Slurs:

DEVON

You think I'm beautiful. Don't you.

She burps wetly. Wipes drool from her chin.

DEVON (CONT'D)

You think you're the luckiest son of a bitch on Earth. Don't you.

RANDOM GUY

Uh-huh.

DEVON

Look at me. That's right. Now tell me. Tell me how sexy I am. Sexyyy mama.

RANDOM GUY

I mean... Fuck yeah. What do you want me to say. You're so hot. Fuck... I could come just looking at you...

She frowns. Feels her belly. He holds up his camera.

DEVON

Uh-huh... Keep talking... Tell me how --

Her torso lurches. A small stream of vomit escapes her lips as the camera flash goes off.

CUT TO IMAGE CAPTURED BY CAMERA.
FADE IN TITLE OVER IMAGE:

DEVON

Monday, December 25, 2006

FADE OUT TITLE AND IMAGE.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Fuck...

Another lurch, bigger this time. Producing more puke.

She tumbles off. Lunges for a door. Vanishes behind it.

RANDOM GUY

You okay?

A vent fan switches on. Its low hum doesn't completely drown out the sound of her retching. He slurs:

RANDOM GUY (CONT'D)

If you need to be close to the toilet we
could always fuck in the bathroom...

INT. JOE & LACEY'S HOME - AFTERNOON

Lacey's side of the story proceeds in reverse
chronology. We pick up her side one hour before we last
saw her with Eva at the birthday cake

LACEY: ONE HOUR EARLIER

Sunday, April 27, 2008

Lacey chats with BETH as the party gets underway. Lacey
holds Eva on her hip. The little girl's hair is tidy, her
dress crisp, her tiara perfectly straight. In Lacey's free
hand is a full tray of plain white-frosted cupcakes.

A woman appears behind Lacey, bearing a Saran-wrapped tray
full of celery with peanut butter. A five-year-old boy
dashes past Lacey. A pony-tailed girl is in hot pursuit.

BETH

Brina, Caden! No running in the house!

(To Lacey)

I am so sorry. All that sugar...

Lacey smiles as Beth heads off after her kids.

The celery lady approaches. AMBER is close to Lacey's age.
CHAZZ, much bigger than Eva, toddles next to Amber.

Across the room, something heavy hits the floor and shatters.

AMBER

Where can I put this and what just broke?

LACEY

I don't know. And I don't know. Amber --

AMBER

I'll find a place for it.

(To Eva)

Hi sunshine. Don't you look pretty.

(To Lacey)

Put her down, let her play.

LACEY

Oh she's not, um... Well... Why not.

Lacey gingerly puts her down. Watches nervously. Eva clings
to her leg. Then reaches to Chazz.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Aw. You like Chazzy, honey?

Chazz scampers about.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Look at him walk. How can they be the same age? Uhhh. I hope Eva catches up.

AMBER

Careful what you wish for... You've got your hands full, come find me later.

Amber and Chazz disappear into the growing crowd. Lacey picks up Eva. Moves toward a table laden with food.

Roy appears, wearing a mock-mournful expression.

ROY

A freckle-faced hellion just broke one of your ceramic bowls.

LACEY

I heard.

ROY

I'm gonna find that kid's mother.

LACEY

Daddy, please. No. Forget it. It's... My fault for setting out the nice stuff. Could you just... Clean it up for me?

Loretta passes, brandishing a broom and dustpan. Sweetly:

LORETTA

Already done. Someone has to sacrifice her good time for the sake of the guests.

To Roy's great relief Lacey does not appear to react. Roy kisses her forehead and hustles off after his wife.

Lacey clears a spot on the food table. Looks around anxiously. Sets down her tray. Coos to Eva:

LACEY

Are you having fun cupcake?

KAREN and MEG stand next to Lacey at the food table. They're taking greedy sips from glasses of wine.

KAREN

I can't believe how decadent we are...

MEG

I almost feel guilty. Like the motherhood gestapo is gonna storm in at any moment and bust us red-handed.

LACEY

I'm sorry, I've just gotta have some...

Lacey swipes Karen's glass and savors a long sip.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Mmmmmmm. The motherhood gestapo can goose-step right up my ass.

The two mothers are struck dumb. Then bust out laughing.

LACEY (CONT'D)

(In her best German accent)

As you ver, ladees...

Lacey excuses herself. Makes her way to the nursery.

The color scheme is black and white, the room sparsely appointed: Crib, nursing chair, bureau, a single wall hanging, a black-and-white mobile over the crib.

Lacey sits with Eva. Pulls out her cell phone. Contemplates making a call. Then shakes her head. Puts the phone down.

She looks down at her arm. Turns it over. Clenches her fist twice. Runs a finger over several old intravenous injection sites in various stages of healing. Gives a rueful grimace.

She picks up the phone again. Speed-dials a number.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Hi. It's me. I know I'm not supposed to do this. But I had to at least leave you a message. Just to say... I love you. And Eva loves you. And we, um... Hope that you make it home... Before the party ends. Okay. Love you. Bye bye.

She hangs up. Shakes her head. Gathers herself.

She turns. To see Devon standing there. Lacey is startled by her sudden appearance. Devon's tone drips with venom:

DEVON

"Love you. Bye bye." You fucking phony.

Devon is almost unrecognizable from the previous scene. She appears to have aged. Her skin is pale and blotchy, her eyes red, with deep, dark circles beneath. Her hair is at a conservative, shoulder length, but it's dull, unbrushed. Her outfit might once have been tasteful, even maternal, but it's dirty, stained, torn. She looks like a down-on-her-luck crystal meth addict on the seventh day of a week-long binge.

Devon refers to a photo on the bureau. And snarls:

DEVON (CONT'D)

Why do you keep that bullshit photo out?
You fucking hate your mother's guts.

Lacey picks up the photo: Herself as an infant, in her mother's arms. Loretta's face wears a smile, but it's forced, devoid of any parental connection or joy.

LACEY

No. I love her. She... I have a very strong connection to her.

DEVON

You lie. Don't give me that shit.

Lacey returns the photo to the bureau.

DEVON (CONT'D)

He's not coming back. You know it.

LACEY

That why you're here? Rub my face in it?

Devon takes out a cigarette. Lights it. Then, mocking:

DEVON

Aw. You just need Joe-Joe to get home. Then it'll all be okay. Won't it?

No response.

DEVON (CONT'D)

You're pathetic. Look at you. Desperate to have him back. That's why you broke down and fucked him again. Isn't it?

LACEY

No, I don't... I don't need him. I don't need... Anybody else.

Devon looks at Eva.

DEVON

Then why was it so important to have her?

No response. Devon's tone grows more scathing still.

DEVON (CONT'D)

You thought she'd keep him around. Didn't you. Help keep his cock in his pants. Didn't you? Didn't you?

LACEY

Shut up.

DEVON

But you're a fucking idiot. Like I was. Men are men. They cheat on you --

LACEY

He's a good man.

DEVON

-- they beat on you, they fuck you in your cunt, they fuck you up the ass, they fuck you in your head, they stab you in the back. Joe is no different.

LACEY
Why are you here?

DEVON
'Cause you invited me.

LACEY
Why did you come?

DEVON
You know what I've come for.

The words chill Lacey to the bone. She clutches Eva.

LACEY
I, um... I can't do this with you right now. I'm going back to my guests.

DEVON
The dutiful hostess. Charming. You are your slut mother's daughter after all.

Lacey stands with Eva. Goes cautiously to the door.

DEVON (CONT'D)
You think I won't come out there? I will ruin this hollow fucking party, I will hound you till you draw your last fucking breath. You know I will. You know it.

Lacey cringes as Devon comes completely unglued.

DEVON (CONT'D)
I want her. I want that fucking baby. Joe is gone, she's no good to you. You fucking give her to me. Now, you fucking cunt. You let me take her right now.

Lacey stares at her, very shaken, seemingly unable to move.

INT. DEVON'S BATHROOM

Devon's side of the story proceeds in normal forward chronology. We pick up her side just five minutes after we last saw her fleeing to the bathroom to vomit

DEVON: FIVE MINUTES LATER
Monday, December 25, 2006

Devon is grasping the rim of the toilet. An ancient basket of potpourri is next to the sink. Beside it, her battered cell phone. Next to that, an unopened pregnancy test kit.

Devon struggles to her feet. Wipes her mouth.

DEVON
Like mama always said, it's not Christmas till somebody pukes.

Through bleary eyes she regards the test kit. Cautiously picks it up. Eyes an overflowing trash can once. Twice.

She abruptly rips open the box and extracts the tester. Squats on the toilet. Wets the tester in a stream of urine. Rises. Doesn't wipe. Perches on the edge of the bathtub. Pauses for a moment. Doesn't want to look at the tester.

Finally, she holds it up. Eyes it tentatively. A line is clearly visible in the tester's circular window: Positive.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Fuck me.

The door swings open, startling her.

RANDOM GUY

I just did.

DEVON

Don't you know how to fucking knock?

RANDOM GUY

Sorry. I have to pee.

DEVON

You "have to pee"? What are you, eight?

She fixes him in her gaze. He blinks back.

DEVON (CONT'D)

So pee pee.

Her eyes stay on him. His dart back and forth, in every direction except at her. He slowly unzips his fly. A brief, feeble trickle commences, then ends. As he zips:

RANDOM GUY

So are we gonna --

DEVON

You're done.

RANDOM GUY

Ohhh-kay. Can I get your number?

DEVON

Why? You know where I live.

An uncomfortable moment.

RANDOM GUY

Well, thanks for the... Christmas sleigh ride. Ha. Christmas lay ride. Get it?

DEVON

Ho ho fucking ho.

He hesitates for a moment. Leans over. Gives her a kiss. She allows it, but does not respond. He leaves.

She grabs her cell phone. Scrolls through the phone book.
Dials a number. Then abruptly hangs up.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Son of a bitch.

She returns her gaze to the tester. Then looks in the mirror. And stares at her haggard reflection.

INT. JOE & LACEY'S KITCHEN - DAY

*We pick up Lacey's side the day before we last saw her
in the nursery with Devon*

LACEY: ONE DAY EARLIER

Saturday, April 26, 2008

Icing emerges from the tip of a cake-decorating bag, forming a purple rose on the white frosting of a cupcake.

Lacey checks her work against a photo in a book. Her brow furrows. She plucks the rose from the cupcake and flings it into the sink, grave to a dozen other aborted roses.

Tins of baked-but-bare cupcakes cover every counter. Eva sits in her high chair, happily munching Cheerios.

LACEY

I suck. It's so frustrating. My mother
can pipe a rose like nobody's business.

ELLEN

So get her to help.

LACEY

I tried. She laughed at me.

About Lacey's age, ELLEN is a real bulldog. The kind of mother who personally leads her neighborhood watch.

Lacey wipes her hands on her apron, which reads: "It's not easy being a Mom. If it was, Dads would do it".

LACEY (CONT'D)

Ready for your cupcake, honey?

Lacey puts one of her few fully decorated cupcakes on a plate. Ellen raises an eyebrow. Much to Lacey's dismay.

ELLEN

Are those no-sugar?

An uncomfortable moment.

LACEY

You know, Ellen, they're not, I thought --

ELLEN

Hey, you know what? Let's give her one
of the bars I made for the party.

She pulls a couple of Tupperwares from a grocery bag. Opens one up and takes out a brownish bar.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

They're Dr Soler's recipe, did she give it to you? Nothing but raisins, dates, spelt flour. And no added sugar.

LACEY

Well, I've... I've told Eva all morning that she'd get a treat for lunch...

ELLEN

Well that's perfect. These are perfect treats. Travis just adores them.

Ellen takes the cupcake off the plate. Replaces it with a raisin-date bar. Sets the plate in front of Eva.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

It's okay, right?

LACEY

Oh, of course. I'm sure she'll love it.

Eva picks at the bar. Ellen watches, greatly satisfied.

ELLEN

Speaking of, I had lunch with Dr Soler yesterday. She's so great. She said she hadn't seen you in a while. What's up?

Lacey grows tense. Grabs her cake-decorating bag.

LACEY

Well, I um... Ellen, to tell you the truth... Soler and I have parted ways.

ELLEN

Why?

LACEY

She's too... I don't know... Yes, I do. She... Pushed too much.

ELLEN

We all need to be pushed, Lacey. You especially, what with that sick child.

LACEY

Actually, Eva is doing much better now. That's part of why I left.

ELLEN

That's exactly why you should stay.

LACEY

Maybe. But I... Chose not too. And I feel good about that.

ELLEN

Lacey, I'm not sure that --

LACEY

Look, Ellen, she may be good for you, she may be good for every other mother on the planet, but she's not good for *me*. Okay?

For a moment, Ellen is speechless. Then she digs in:

ELLEN

It's not about you Lacey, it's about Eva.

LACEY

Yes, it's about Eva. Which is why it's about me. If Eva learns to take care of herself it'll only be because I've finally started taking care of myself.

(Pointedly)

Soler wasn't working for me. That decision does not require your approval.

She plucks the bar from Eva's plate.

LACEY (CONT'D)

And the brown mush ball here? Not working for my daughter. Also does not require your approval.

She flings it into the sink with the spent roses. Replaces it with the cupcake.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Here honey. Happy early birthday.

(To Ellen)

And if none of this is working for you, Ellen, you may find the front door more to your liking. Come to think of it, that'll work for me pretty damn well.

Ellen is in utter disbelief. A long, uncomfortable moment. Finally, she grabs her Tupperwares. Marches defiantly out. Shuts the front door firmly behind her.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Bitch.

She takes a deep breath. Looks down at Eva, who has made quick work of demolishing the cupcake.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Oh gosh, honey. Is that so much better than Ellen's raisin-turd bars?

She smiles at Eva. Then has an idea.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Hey, let's send Daddy a picture!

She completely forgets Ellen. Grabs her cell phone from the counter. Crouches next to Eva. Eva reaches out and smears Lacey's face with frosting. Lacey is tickled by the gesture.

She grins at Eva. Then joins in: She takes some frosting from the cupcake. Gleeefully smears some of it back on Eva's face. Then some more on her own. The two are now frosting-smearred from hair to chin, laughing, enjoying the mess.

LACEY (CONT'D)
Mmm. Like mama like baby, right? Smile
for Daddy now... One, two, three...

Lacey leans in for a kiss. The camera flash goes off, capturing a joyful tableau.

CUT TO IMAGE CAPTURED BY CAMERA.

FADE OUT IMAGE.

LACEY (CONT'D)
It's perfect! Look honey.

Lacey shows Eva the picture. Wipes her own hands clean. Pushes a few buttons on the phone. It emits a tone.

LACEY (CONT'D)
Sent.

The phone emits a second tone, different from the first.

LACEY (CONT'D)
How funny! Daddy sent us a message, too.

Lacey's face falls.

SUPERIMPOSE TEXT MESSAGE:

May not be home for party. Confused, need time.
Please don't call. J

FADE OUT TEXT MESSAGE.

She processes the message in silent disbelief, as she wipes frosting from her face.

INT. COMMUNITY HEALTH CLINIC - MORNING

We pick up Devon's side three weeks after we last saw her in the bathroom with the pregnancy tester

DEVON: THREE WEEKS LATER
Tuesday, January 16, 2007

Devon is on her back, her feet up in stirrups. She is scowling. Resentful of everything about her situation.

An unseen physician sits at Devon's feet, guiding an invasive ultrasound transducer up into her vagina.

Next to Devon stands SARA, street-wise, regal, mid-forties.

SARA
Is there a father?

DEVON
No. I conceived immaculately.

SARA
Okay. Do you know who the father is?

Devon hesitates. Steals a glance at Sara's name tag.

DEVON
Yes, Sara. I... Think I do.

On a monitor next to Devon forms the monochrome image of her embryonic child. Sara points to a portion of the image.

SARA
So Devon, you can see here that the --

DEVON
Not interested.

A moment.

SARA
Okay... Well, we'll just finish up --

DEVON
(Referring to the physician)
There anything she could do with that
supersonic dildo to make me miscarry?

Sara gives her a very shocked look.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Jeez, unclench the sphincter. Just
trying to save us some steps.

The physician wraps it up. Stands.

It's Lacey. Her hair is noticeably shorter than in previous scenes. She nods to Sara. Heads silently out the door.

SARA
(To Devon)
You can put your pants back on. I'll be
with you in a few minutes.

No response. Sara grabs the sonogram print-out from the machine next to Devon. Follows Lacey to a nearby office.

SARA (CONT'D)
You okay, Lacey?

LACEY
Mm. Fine, I'm fine...

SARA

Oh, right. You got your test results, didn't you? I totally forgot today was the day. Well? Good news? Bad news?
(Off of Lacey's look)
You-don't-want-to-talk-about-it news.
Okay, not a problem.

Lacey smiles. Sara holds up the sonogram print-out.

SARA (CONT'D)

I'll find someone else to look at this.

LACEY

No no. I could use the distraction.

Lacey focuses her attention on the sonogram.

SARA

So what do you think then? Viable?

LACEY

Mmm... Borderline, could go either way.

SARA

Well, it's your call...

Lacey suddenly becomes distracted. After a moment:

LACEY

How, um... How old is the patient again?

SARA

One sec... Not quite twenty.

LACEY

User? Other health issues?

SARA

She... She says no. Why --

LACEY

Do we know the ethnicity of the father?

SARA

I didn't ask, of course.

Lacey nods vacantly. Stares off into the distance.

SARA (CONT'D)

Are you okay, Lacey?

A long moment. Sara watches Lacey with growing concern.

LACEY

I'm... I'm pregnant, Sara.

Sara's eyes grow wide. She fails to completely muffle a scream. Throws her arms around Lacey. Jumps up and down.

SARA
Congratulations! Christ you scared me.
I thought it was gonna be bad news. An
inhospitable uterus or something.

LACEY
Me too. It's... Surreal. I've...

A moment. Lacey is distressed.

SARA
Lace, what's going on? You need a pill?

LACEY
No no, please. I'm fine. Just...
Preoccupied. Joe, Dubai...
(Off of Sara's look)
Potential job. He wants us to move.
I'll tell you about it later.

A moment. Lacey's thoughts weigh heavily on her.

SARA
Honey. Smile. This is good news.

A moment. Lacey suddenly brightens up. Shakes it off.

LACEY
You're right. It *is* good news. I'm just
being... Crazy. This is good news.

She returns her attention to the sonogram.

LACEY (CONT'D)
Okay, so... Viable.

SARA
You sure?

LACEY
Definitely. Anything else?

Sara shakes her head. Gives Lacey a smile.

Sara walks back to Devon. Sits. Gives a stern look.

SARA
I'm sorry, it's not an option.

DEVON
What do you mean it's not an option?

SARA
You're past your twentieth week.

DEVON
What the fuck difference does that make?

SARA

One last time: You curb that mouth. Or the door is right there.

Devon glares. But changes her tone.

DEVON

Why's that matter, I'm not even showing.

SARA

After twenty weeks we're legally required to assess whether the fetus is viable. The head measurements say it is.

(Refers to the print-out)

You can see right here...

DEVON

I told you before, I'm --

SARA

Right right, not interested. Well, in the state of Missouri viability is the bottom line. So unless the pregnancy endangers your life or health -- you have any reason to believe it will?

Devon shakes her head.

SARA (CONT'D)

Then you're going to have this baby.

DEVON

If I had come in before?

SARA

Abortion might've been an option.

Devon drops her head to her hands. Inhales sharply.

SARA (CONT'D)

Will the father be available to help?

DEVON

Maybe. No. I don't know.

SARA

Mother? Older sisters? Aunts? Anyone?

DEVON

No. No one.

SARA

Well, we've got time to figure this out. I'll be with you through your term. And for any hospital admissions, God forbid.

Sara places one of the sonograms in an envelope. Grabs a few brochures. Hands them to Devon, with the sonogram.

SARA (CONT'D)

Schedule a follow-up at reception. We'll need to see you every two weeks to start.

Devon sits, stone-faced.

SARA (CONT'D)

Look, I understand that you're scared...

DEVON

I'm not scared.

SARA

Then I understand that you're whatever it is you want to call it. Okay? We can help you Devon, it's why we're here. I hope that you let us. Because like it or not, you're going to need it.

Devon stands. Walks out through reception. Pulls on her military-surplus parka. Sticks the brochures and sonogram under her arm. Rummages for her keys. The sonogram falls from its envelope to the floor.

Lacey walks past. Picks it up. Regards the image. Then extends it to Devon.

LACEY

Miss. You dropped your sonogram.

DEVON

Keep it.

Devon marches out.

INT. JOE & LACEY'S HOME - MORNING

We pick up Lacey's side two weeks before we last saw her in the kitchen telling off Ellen

LACEY: TWO WEEKS EARLIER

Saturday, April 12, 2008

Eva's nursery. 50-week-old Eva is asleep in her crib. In the corner, a few pieces of imposing medical equipment loom: Apnea monitor, nebulizer, three oxygen canisters.

Lacey sits on the floor among a large bag of trash and many boxes. She is worrying over two piles of items.

In the smaller pile are three books, a pastel-colored mobile, and two pieces of baby-related equipment. She examines the books. Tosses two in the open box beside her. The third she places on top of the larger pile.

Lacey grows alert. Peers down the hall. Turns back to Eva.

LACEY

So sweet. So forgiving. Aren't you?

She reaches under the crib mattress, careful not to wake Eva. Withdraws several hypodermic needles. Counts them. Nods. Buries them near the bottom of the bag of trash.

She exhales heavily. Returns her attention to the larger pile of items. Looks at the open box. Then at the pile.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Just... Throw it away. Throw it away.

She takes a deep breath. Packs the larger pile of items into the box with everything else. Tapes it shut. In crisp letters she labels it "For Salvation Army, 7 of 7".

From the smaller pile, she lifts up the pastel-colored mobile. Carefully disentangles its wires. Contemplates it with a sad smile.

JOE walks in. He's quite a catch: Tall, fit, good-looking. Masculine yet well groomed. He refers to the mobile:

JOE

I thought it wasn't --

LACEY

It's fine. I'm the one that's not right.

He turns to leave.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Please don't go...

She puts down the mobile. Rushes to him. Holds him.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Please look at me.

He does.

LACEY (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

JOE

Nothing.

He pulls away. She yearns to connect.

LACEY

Joe... I'm trying. Don't you see that? To let go of... The things that don't matter. Whatever you've done in the past... Whatever I've done... If you can let it go... I can, too. Can you?

No response. She switches tactics:

LACEY (CONT'D)

Okay, no talk then. Just... Hold me.

JOE
Sex won't fix this.

LACEY
This isn't about sex. It's about... The
only thing that does matter.

A moment.

LACEY (CONT'D)
Do you love me?

JOE
You know I do. More than anything. I
just... I'm not sure I want to anymore.

The words hit Lacey like a truck. She grows desperate.

LACEY
Please hold me. Please.

He does. Just to calm her down. Her state worsens.

LACEY (CONT'D)
Please don't go to Chicago tomorrow.

JOE
What?

LACEY
Please don't go.

JOE
Lacey... I have to work.

LACEY
Quit. I'll go back to work. I'll
support us. Just please don't go.
Please, please don't go.

JOE
Lacey...

She kisses him feverishly, for a moment. He pulls his head
back. She looks terrified.

JOE (CONT'D)
Honey... What's going on?

He pulls her close. Holds her tightly. Soothes her.

JOE (CONT'D)
Shh shh shh... It's okay...

She relaxes into him. He kisses her forehead. A moment.
She moves her lips to his. He kisses her cheek. Hesitates.
Then kisses her lips. First cautiously. Then heavily.

She's madly hungry for him. Her passion catches him by
surprise. Then by the balls. They make out wildly.

She takes his hand. Leads him to the bedroom.

She pulls him onto the bed. Takes a long look into his eyes. As though she'd never seen him before. Then, in a whisper:

LACEY
Are you really here?

JOE
Of course I am. What's --

LACEY
Sometimes I get so afraid. I... Don't know what's real and what's in my head.

JOE
Shh. I'm real. Here. Not in Chicago.

He kisses her. She clutches him. Savors his smell.

A cry echoes out from the baby monitor. Joe's eyes shift toward the nursery. He's expecting Lacey to pull away.

JOE (CONT'D)
Shouldn't we...

Her eyes answer: No. He's amazed. He kisses her deeply. Her face relaxes into a smile of joy, of great relief.

He unbuttons her shirt. She rips off his. They fall into lovemaking with the intensity of the first time.

INT. DEVON'S APARTMENT - MORNING
We pick up Devon's side eleven days after we last saw her walking out of the clinic

DEVON: ELEVEN DAYS LATER
Saturday, January 27, 2007

Devon sits at the table, beer in hand. MARIO is next to her. He's in his late twenties, dark, dangerously sexy.

He divides lines of white powder on the glass of a cheap drug-store wall hanging. Devon listens to a voice message through the speaker of her cell phone.

SARA'S VOICE (RECORDED)
... So Devon, we'll see you this Tuesday, January thirtieth at eleven A.M. Please do not miss this one? Thank you.

DEVON
That's her.

She skips to the next message.

BEN'S VOICE (RECORDED)
Where were you? Really hoses me and Dave when you skip out. Gonna show tonight?

MARIO
What does that dipshit want?

DEVON
Don't call him that. He's nice.

A moment.

MARIO
So is it mine?

DEVON
Yes you asshole, it's yours.

His eyes flash with volatile anger.

MARIO
Watch your fucking mouth.

He returns to his lines.

MARIO (CONT'D)
So get an abortion.

DEVON
I told you, I can't.

MARIO
Why the hell can't you?

DEVON
I waited too long to go to the hospital.

Mario takes out a cigarette.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Can you not? You know I hate that.

He gives her a look. Puts the cigarette away.

MARIO
Who says you have to do it in a hospital?
T's got an associate, does it sometimes.

Her eyes narrow.

DEVON
Like I'm gonna have my insides scraped
out with a coat hanger by one of your
scummy friends. Especially one who does
it *part-time*. I mean what's he do the
rest of the time, fix washing machines?

MARIO
So what are you gonna do, have it? Heh-
heh. You gonna be a mommy?

DEVON
Fuck you, Mario.

She empties her beer. He leaps up and slaps the can out of her hand. Grabs her face violently.

MARIO

I said watch your fucking mouth.

He sits. She huddles in quiet fear. After a moment, weakly:

DEVON

I was thinking about keeping it even before.

He grabs a piece of junk mail from the table. Tears off a corner. Finds a pen. Scribbles on the pink paper.

MARIO

I'm not paying for shit either way.

He slides the paper toward her.

MARIO (CONT'D)

T's cell. Don't be stupid. Call him.

She frowns. Rubs her belly uncomfortably. Looks at the number. Pockets it. He suddenly sits upright.

MARIO (CONT'D)

You know... Maybe having it's not a bad idea. A white baby is worth some change.

DEVON

Half-white.

MARIO

Fuck you, I'm white. And whatever you get? I get fifty percent. Only fair.

He sits back. Slides the glass toward her. Tosses a small blue Ziploc bag filled with powder at her.

MARIO (CONT'D)

You still owe me for last month's order.

Devon grabs a cut-off juice-box straw. Inhales a line.

INT. DR SOLER'S OFFICE - DAY

We pick up Lacey's side seven weeks before we last saw her in the nursery and bedroom with Joe

LACEY: SEVEN WEEKS EARLIER

Friday, February 22, 2008

A pediatrician in her late thirties, DR SOLER is behind a desk, speaking to her concerned NURSE ASSISTANT.

DR SOLER

... Then show her into the exam room.

NURSE ASSISTANT

She's already there.

Dr Soler walks into the adjacent room. Clad in a thick wool coat, Lacey paces, clutching 42-week-old Eva. Lacey's breathing is irregular, her speech frantic.

LACEY

Doctor... Thank you... Thank you...

DR SOLER

Of course, Lacey, what is the --

LACEY

She's hurt, I've hurt her, I've hurt Eva.

DR SOLER

Why didn't you go to the emergency room?

The doctor tries to inspect the wound. Lacey does not look at the child. But will not let loose of her.

LACEY

I... I don't know... Why... Why didn't we go to the emergency room I --

DR SOLER

Never mind. Let me look at her.

Lacey looks around manically.

DR SOLER (CONT'D)

Lacey. Let me see Eva. Lacey.

Lacey looks up suddenly. Allows the doctor to take Eva.

DR SOLER (CONT'D)

Now sit down. Take a breath. And tell me what happened.

Soler examines Eva. Lacey is confused, stuttering.

LACEY

I don't know, we were at the playground and... And she was... Playing. And I don't know, she was fine, and... Then there was... Blood, I don't know what happened I don't know what happened I --

DR SOLER

Lacey...

LACEY

I wasn't paying enough attention and then... She was screaming and there was... Blood all over and it was --

DR SOLER

Lacey...

Her breathing and speech grow even more irregular.

LACEY
I don't... Want to, I just, I'm not...
Good enough, I'm... I can't, please...

She trails off, silent. In another world.

DR SOLER
You can't what, Lacey?

Lacey is still. She does not blink. Her mouth hangs.

DR SOLER (CONT'D)
Lacey. Lacey. I need you to talk to me.
Okay? Lacey, I am talking to you. I
need you to talk to me. Lacey. Find
your words. And talk to me. Now.

A long moment.

LACEY
What do you... Want me to say?

Dr Soler places Eva in Lacey's arms.

DR SOLER
I want you to say hello to your daughter.

Lacey looks at the doctor. Then at Eva. Lacey's face registers no emotion, no recognition.

Eva is silent. As she has been since arriving.

DR SOLER (CONT'D)
She's fine, Lacey.

LACEY
But... There was so much blood...

DR SOLER
There's a cut, and a small contusion.
But the bleeding has already stopped.
We'll dress the wound and she'll be fine.

Lacey sits in silence. Staring at Eva.

DR SOLER (CONT'D)
Why such a commotion over a boo-boo?

LACEY
What... Do you mean?

DR SOLER
You're an experienced physician's
assistant. You've seen blood before.

LACEY
I know... When it's her blood it's
different. I can't tell you why...

DR SOLER

I can. Anxiety. Persistent. And I'm concerned it's having an effect on Eva. You need to be seeing a psychiatrist.

LACEY

But I... Really don't --

DR SOLER

Enough denial, Lacey. No more.

No response.

DR SOLER (CONT'D)

Eva's out of the woods. No pulmonary problems or other complications from her prematurity. But your emotional unrest is a burden to her. I'm sure of it.

Lacey absorbs the doctor's words. Stares at Eva.

DR SOLER (CONT'D)

If not for me, if not for yourself, then for Eva. Tomorrow would not be too soon.

Eva reaches out for Lacey.

EVA

Mama.

Lacey's eyes widen. She inhales sharply. Looks up at Dr Soler. Then back at Eva. Tears gather in her eyes.

LACEY

Mama. I'm your mama. Right?

She begins to shake. Resists. But cries audibly.

DR SOLER

Lacey, don't get distracted from --

LACEY

I'm sorry, can we... Have a moment?

Dr Soler raises an eyebrow. Contemplates the request. Then leaves the room, shutting the door behind her.

Lacey is overcome. She hugs Eva tightly. And is wracked by waves of deep, mournful sobs.

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - MORNING

We pick up Devon's side ten days after we last saw her snorting coke with Mario

DEVON: TEN DAYS LATER

Tuesday, February 6, 2007

HILLARY's styling is modest, her furnishings cheap. Devon steals glances at the certificates on her wall.

HILLARY

Did someone at the clinic tell you that?

DEVON

They did not. My... Research revealed this... Fact. You're a lawyer, correct?

HILLARY

Yes. And your research got it wrong: The biological mother in an adoption may receive reimbursement for substantiated expenses, but not cash payments. You may be thinking of surrogacy. Or perhaps even the state's assistance programs?

(Off of Devon's look)

Welfare. For those who qualify.

Devon perks up. Hillary grabs a brochure from a drawer. Slides it toward Devon. Who eagerly flips through it.

HILLARY (CONT'D)

But don't dismiss open adoption. It's not without its own unique benefits.

DEVON

To me? I mean, to the mother?

HILLARY

Absolutely. You would remain in your child's life without having to assume any financial responsibility. And whichever parents you choose will of course agree --

DEVON

I'd get to choose them?

HILLARY

Yes, you would -- they'd pay all of the medical bills related to your pregnancy.

DEVON

The medical bills. So the hospital gets money. And the agency gets money...

HILLARY

Well, yes.

DEVON

And you get money...

HILLARY

Yes, Devon, this is my profession.

DEVON

But I -- but the mother doesn't get any.

HILLARY

Not in your pocket, no.

A moment. Devon drops the sophisticated act.

DEVON

So what the fuck would I get out of it?

HILLARY

Well... You'll know that your baby is alive, and loved. By someone who can maybe give it a better life than you can.

DEVON

You think I wouldn't make a good mother.

HILLARY

I don't know whether you would. Do you?

A tense moment. Devon shifts uneasily in her chair.

DEVON

No.

HILLARY

Well, are you ready to raise a child? Financially, mentally, emotionally ready?

DEVON

Maybe not. But do I have to be? My mom was unprepared, I turned out okay.

Hillary's eyebrow's shoot upward: Did you? Devon scowls.

DEVON (CONT'D)

What is that supposed to mean?

HILLARY

Nothing, I just --

DEVON

Screw you, lady. You know, not everyone who doesn't get born to Bob and Judy in a white house in the suburbs, who doesn't go to some crappy little law school and work in some crappy little strip mall office, next to a Kentucky Fried fucking Chicken for God's sake, ends up a loser.

She grabs her Navy pea coat and heads toward the door.

HILLARY

I was not born --

DEVON

I don't give a rat's ass! You're wrong about me. I can do this. I can change.

HILLARY

Devon, this is not --

DEVON

Thank you for my thirty fucking minutes.

She marches out.

A moment. She marches defiantly back in.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Can I... Have your card?

The lawyer hesitates. Then extends a white card. Devon takes it. Gives a nod. And slinks out.

EXT. PARK PLAYGROUND - DAY
We pick up Lacey's side just twenty minutes before we last saw her with Eva in Dr Soler's office

LACEY: TWENTY MINUTES EARLIER
Friday, February 22, 2008

A beautiful late-winter afternoon. A mother pushes her child on a swing. Another laughs with her kids on the merry-go-round. A third cuddles her infant on a bench.

42-week-old Eva is bundled up, playing in the sand next to the jungle gym. Lacey, in the wool coat from her previous scene, sits on a bench, reading. Muttering back to the book.

LACEY
Are you kidding me? When did you write this? Where did you get your license?

In the background, someone clad in white stalks through the trees. Lacey looks around. Then suddenly panics:

LACEY (CONT'D)
Eva!?

She spots Eva. Who to Lacey's dismay has pulled herself to her feet via the metal floor of the merry-go-round.

LACEY (CONT'D)
Eva. There's probably rotoviruses all over that thing. Uhhh...

She rummages through her bag to find antiseptic wipes. Sets to work on Eva's hands. A YOUNG WOMAN watches.

WOMAN IN PLAYGROUND
You never can keep them clean, can you?

Lacey gives the woman a blank stare.

WOMAN IN PLAYGROUND (CONT'D)
That was... A joke.

LACEY
Oh. Ha ha ha...

WOMAN IN PLAYGROUND
I didn't mean you in particular. It's just hard... In general, isn't it? They're all over the place at once.

LACEY
Yes they are... This is Eva.

Lacey looks around the playground.

LACEY (CONT'D)
Which one's yours?

WOMAN IN PLAYGROUND
Oh, I used to come here all the time with April. My daughter. She loved it here.

LACEY
I see.

A pregnant pause. Lacey doesn't see. Off of her look:

WOMAN IN PLAYGROUND
April was taken from us. Three months ago today.

LACEY
My God. Who took her?

WOMAN IN PLAYGROUND
Oh, no one no one. God, I guess. I went in that morning and she was... Gone.

Lacey is nearly speechless. She fumbles for her words.

LACEY
Eva... Was born sick. So I understand.

A very uncomfortable moment. Lacey scoops Eva up.

LACEY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry... She just loves the swings.

Lacey hurries away. Sets Eva down in the sand next to the swing set. Fidgets anxiously.

She watches Eva pull herself to her feet. Then looks up.

Devon is there. Looking lovely in a cream sweater and matching coat, a cigarette dangling between her fingers.

Lacey is very shocked. She spins around to see if the woman is watching. She's gone. Lacey turns back. Devon has moved right next to Eva.

DEVON
That woman lost her little girl, and you understand? I don't think you do. I can help you understand, though...

Lacey moves quickly in Eva's direction.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Come on, Lace. Are you afraid of me?

Lacey stops.

LACEY

No.

DEVON

That she might like me better, then, that
it? That she'll want to come with me.
That it's better than any life with you.

(To Eva)

Come on, sweetheart. Come right here...

Lacey fights to stay calm.

LACEY

She won't. Not ever.

DEVON

She will. One day she will. You'll make
some fatal error in judgment --

LACEY

Not likely.

DEVON

-- and I'll just snatch her. Or like
that woman: You'll do everything right,
be absolutely vigilant. And then go into
her room one morning and she's...

Lacey's face betrays her building anxiety.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Just... Gone.

Eva's screams pierce the air.

LACEY

Eva! Eva!

The child has fallen. Hit her head against the equipment.
Lacey rushes to her. Blood is coming from her forehead.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Oh my God oh my God oh my God...

Lacey grabs the screaming child. Runs to the car. Fumbles
with her keys. Manages to get the door open. Opens the rear
door. Struggles to get Eva into her car seat.

She jumps into the driver's seat. Finds the right key,
starts the car up, jerks the transmission into reverse.

She looks in her side mirror. Goes deathly pale.

Devon is at the rear door, reaching to open it.

Lacey slams on the accelerator. Her car shoots backward into
a light pole, crushing the rear fender.

She peels out of the lot.

INT. BAR CHOOZY

We pick up Devon's side eight days after we last saw her in the adoption lawyer's office

DEVON: EIGHT DAYS LATER

Wednesday, February 14, 2007

The bar is dark, empty. Devon sits surrounded by empty shot glasses. A full shot of whiskey is in front of her, another in her hand. She stares at the pink piece of paper with T's number, and next to it the lawyer's white card.

BEN

Yeah, that was Gladys. Chased me around the car with a broom, can you believe it? Neighbors watching, she didn't care. Could have been a news copter overhead, it wouldn't have slowed her down.

BEN nurses his beer. He is lean, mid-thirties, scruffy, shirt sleeves rolled up high. He looks for a reaction.

BEN (CONT'D)

You know this is the first time you've ever said a word about your old lady? You've talked about your dad but --

DEVON

Not much to tell.

BEN

Come on.

DEVON

Trust me. Why are we talking about this?

BEN

'Cause you brought it up.

DEVON

No I didn't.

BEN

Yeah you did. About how she'd paint herself up like a ho every February fourteenth, bring home a strange guy...

DEVON

Oh. Right. Well that's about as interesting as it gets...

She sips her whiskey. Shakes her head.

DEVON (CONT'D)

It's just... She's just...

BEN

What?

A moment. Then from out of nowhere:

DEVON

She's like, one of those chimpanzee mothers who some scientist fucked up by keeping them in solitary confinement their whole lives and then got them pregnant. Her poor little monkey baby comes out and she has no idea what to do with it. And if she does do something, better watch out 'cause she's more likely to crack the baby's skull in her jaws than love it or nurture it, or, you know.

He nods, wide-eyed. She polishes off her shot.

DEVON (CONT'D)

So, whatever. I figured out early on my mother was the fucked-up chimpanzee variety. I kept my distance till I could get the fuck out.

He sucks on his beer. In a matter-of-fact tone:

BEN

You know she finally... Passed. Gladys.

DEVON

Jeez. No. When?

BEN

Four weeks now. Emphysema won out.

DEVON

Why the hell didn't you say something?

BEN

Dunno. Not worth talking about.

DEVON

God, I'm so sorry, Ben.

BEN

Thanks. I mean I loved her. Deeply, but... Truth is she wasn't much above the fucked-up chimpanzee variety herself. Maybe a little more evolved. Like a fucked-up bonobo. But that's it.

DEVON

What the fuck is a bonobo?

BEN

Like a chimpanzee, but smarter.

DEVON

But smarter.

BEN

Yep.

DEVON

But still a mother-fucking ape.

He nods. They enjoy the silence. Then, sincerely:

DEVON (CONT'D)

You think I'd make a good mother?

He is struck dumb. Then can't restrain a chuckle.

BEN

What, are you kidding me?

DEVON

No I'm not, asshole... Well?

He shrugs, not sure what to say.

BEN

I just think a baby'd have a hard time...

DEVON

What.

BEN

Making it out past your gigantic fucking balls.

He bursts out laughing.

DEVON

Fuck you, dick!

BEN

What, right here?

He grabs her playfully.

BEN (CONT'D)

Now that's more like it. You've screwed every other guy in the grain belt, I just knew eventually you'd get around to me...

She's caught off guard. But opens up to him. For just a moment. Then abruptly shrugs him off. Looks away.

DEVON

Ben... I really am so, so sorry about missing shifts. I promise to do better.

He smiles. She fidgets anxiously.

DEVON (CONT'D)

I've just had a lot going on lately... Hey do you, um... You think you could start... Paying me under the table?

BEN

Everything okay?

She nods.

BEN (CONT'D)

Wanna tell me why?

DEVON

Not just yet.

He sips his beer. It's against his better judgment but:

BEN

Sure thing. So whaddya say we open up this beer cart? Almost eleven-thirty...

DEVON

Are you kidding? It's my day off.

BEN

Then why the hell're you here?

DEVON

Dunno. I was bored. Figured you could use some company.

She stands. The brochure from the lawyer is tucked in her back pocket. She gives him a grin. Downs her second shot.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Well I'm outta here. See you tomorrow.

She wraps up in a parka. Grabs the numbers from the bar. And bounds out the door into the bright winter sun.

INT. JOE & LACEY'S HOME - DAY

We pick up Lacey's side twelve days before we last saw her peeling out of the playground parking lot

LACEY: TWELVE DAYS EARLIER

Sunday, February 10, 2008

Lacey presides with stiff grace over a table to make Martha Stewart proud. It is immaculately set in blood reds, crisp whites, accents of silver. On the sideboard, a flowing chocolate fountain rises from a base of strawberries.

41-week-old Eva is in her chair. Lacey spoons homemade pureed green beans into her mouth. After each bite, she wipes clean Eva's face, her tray, her starched bib.

ROY

Amazing, Lace. Best Eggs Benedict ever.

Joe is particularly eager to play for Roy the role of faithful husband, doting father, upstanding son-in-law.

JOE

She sure knows her way around a kitchen.
Must have gotten more than just her good
looks from her mother, right?

LORETTA

Charmer. But truly, I think that may be
the only thing she got from her mother.

She gives a wink to Joe, a sweet smile to Lacey. Who does
not appear to react. Roy steps in with small talk.

ROY

And this is amazing china, honey.

LACEY

Isn't it? It was originally Joe's great-
grandmother's. We don't use it much.
But I figured you were worth it, Daddy.

Roy turns to his son-in-law.

ROY

So, Joe. How's work treating you?

JOE

Really well Roy. Though it's a bit much.
I'm away a lot. In Chicago every week.

LACEY

Even some weekends.

Loretta takes a sudden interest.

LORETTA

Weekends. Really. Well we're glad you
can spare this one to be with us.

ROY

Nothing wrong with hard work. What do
you do for fun? Chicago's some town...

JOE

There's not a lot of time to play...

Loretta stands. Begins to clear plates. Lacey follows suit.
Joe grabs Lacey's unfinished plate to eat what she left over.

LACEY

Joe, can you take her while I do dessert?

ROY

Why don't I do that for you?

LACEY

Daddy, they're souffles.

JOE

She's fine in her chair.

LACEY

Joey, she's tired of being strapped in.

Joe obeys. Loretta glides to the kitchen. Lacey follows.

In the kitchen, Lacey begins to clean up. Loretta moves to the oven. Extracts the chocolatey desserts.

In the background, Joe polishes off the last of Lacey's eggs. He calls to the kitchen:

JOE

Why haven't you made this before, hon?

Lacey does not respond. Loretta mutters quietly to herself:

LORETTA

Because I didn't give her the recipe until yesterday.

Loretta maneuvers the souffles onto plates. Spoons white crème fraîche at the base of each. Tops them with sliced strawberries. As she does, she speaks to Lacey sweetly:

LORETTA (CONT'D)

Darling, maybe that's why Joe's spending so much time in Chicago. He's not getting what he needs from your kitchen. I mean a man's got to eat, right?

Lacey does not get the drift.

LACEY

Of course he does. His project is in Chicago. If that's where he has to go...

Loretta stares at her daughter. Shakes her head.

LORETTA

I mean, aren't you concerned by Joe's newfound streak of... Independence?

LACEY

He's always been independent.

LORETTA

Please, men go from their mother's breast to their girlfriend's to their wife's. They only ever separate themselves from one in order to switch to another.

No response. In the background, Eva begins to fuss.

LACEY

I mean, he's dressing better, losing weight. Even doing his own laundry, something your father has never done in --

Lacey suddenly grows alert.

LACEY (CONT'D)

What did you say?

LORETTA

Last night. I was doing a load of whites for you and asked Joe if he had anything. He said he'd do them himself. Why?

A moment. Lacey's manner grows firm, yet upbeat.

LACEY

Mother, please sit down.

LORETTA

I'm not finished with the --

LACEY

I can handle this. Sit down.

Loretta moves reluctantly back to the dining room.

Lacey turns away from the table. Her brow wrinkles, as though she were about to cry. But she fights it back.

She picks up two plated desserts in her right hand, a third in her left. Inches out of the kitchen.

Eva lets out a single wail. Lacey looks up. Her right elbow hits a wall corner. Both plates drop to the tile floor and shatter. Lacey freezes. Eva begins to cry.

Lacey is furious. She looks down at the plates. Then at Joe. She still has a dessert plate in her left hand.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Bring her to me.

He stares at her. But doesn't respond. She turns livid.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Joe. Bring. Her. To. Me. Now.

Still no response. Lacey flings the third dessert to the floor. It explodes into shards. Eva is now screaming.

Lacey snatches Eva from Joe. And with strange calm:

LACEY (CONT'D)

She's hungry. I'm going to feed her.

Lacey exits. Joe and Loretta sit in stone cold silence, as Roy hastens to clean up the mess.

INT. WELFARE OFFICE - DAY

We pick up Devon's side just two hours after we last saw her in the bar with Ben

DEVON: TWO HOURS LATER

Wednesday, February 14, 2007

Devon is standing in line, still tipsy from the bar. She stands uncomfortably, talking to Mario on her cell phone, pulling at the waistband of her jeans all the while.

DEVON

No, I'm here. In line... Yeah, gonna leave with some cashola. Wanna party tonight? On me. Well, on Missouri...

CLERK

Next.

DEVON

Okay, that's cool... No, yeah, you gotta do your thing, I understand...

CLERK

Miss. Are you next or not?

DEVON

Jeez, will you unclench?

(Into her phone)

Not you not you, Uptight Annie here...

Okay, gotta go. Bye.

She sidles up to the window. A basket of candies wrapped in red foil sits before the cheerless clerk.

CLERK

Forms?

Devon slides them to her. The clerk shuffles them.

CLERK (CONT'D)

So... No children under eighteen?

Devon rolls her eyes at the mathematical improbability.

DEVON

No.

CLERK

Are you pregnant?

DEVON

What does it look like?

CLERK

Are you pregnant?

DEVON

Yes. Jeez. Humor-free...

CLERK

What's your income?

DEVON

About, um... Fourteen thousand.

CLERK

Per year?

DEVON

No, per week. Yes. Duh.

CLERK

Do you have household resources greater than \$1,000, including checking and savings accounts, cash on hand, and the cash surrender value of any life insurance policies?

DEVON

I wish.

CLERK

Is that a no?

DEVON

Yes. It's a no.

CLERK

Will the new little one reside with you?

DEVON

Um. Yes. Definitely.

CLERK

You appear to be eligible for temporary assistance from the state of Missouri. Now along with the benefits come responsibilities. Read about both here.

The clerks slides papers toward Devon, as well as a brochure. It matches the one that Devon pulls out of her back pocket.

DEVON

Already got it.

CLERK

Came prepared, how nice. Fill out and sign this declaration, then return here.

Devon brightens up. She walks to the communal form-filling table. Grabs a pen. Chews on the end. Finds the part of her brochure that specifies the benefit amounts.

She pulls at her waistband. Looks around. Sees a lady next to her. Slides toward her. Sticks the brochure in her face.

DEVON

Can you make any money raising a kid on this much?

A moment. The woman gestures to five children of variously mixed race gathered around her.

WELFARE MOTHER

What does it look like?

INT. JOE & LACEY'S HOME - MORNING

We pick up Lacey's side four weeks before we last saw her walking out of the family brunch

LACEY: FOUR WEEKS EARLIER

Tuesday, January 15, 2008

Lacey and 37-week-old Eva sit among seven other mother-infant pairs. The boy-to-girl ratio is exactly one to one. The snack table is orderly and healthful. Some of the mothers were at Eva's party. Others are new faces.

Ellen is leading the women in a baby-signing exercise. In front of each mother is a chart with basic signs. The other mothers are at various levels of disengagement with both the task and their children. But Lacey's focus on both is unrelenting. Though clearly lacking in tenderness.

Next to Lacey is a book, a bottle, and a Tupperware full of Cheerios. At the moment, Lacey is repeatedly placing a hat on Eva's head while making the sign for "hat".

ELLEN

Careful, Lacey, your "hat" is looking a lot like "Daddy".

Confused, Lacey checks her chart.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Our goal here is to reduce Eva's frustration, not add to it. Sign clearly, distinctly.

Lacey nods her head intently. Tries "hat" again.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

And consistently. You've got to be disciplined, or your baby never will be.

KAREN

Does it have to be about discipline?

ELLEN

You know what I mean. We're starting these kids so late. Some moms are signing to their infants at six months. We're all almost at nine. Without hard work these kids are never gonna catch up.

AMBER

(To Karen)

I didn't know this was a race.

Karen chuckles. Ellen gives a disapproving look. Lacey switches from "hat" to "milk", using Eva's bottle as the cue.

ELLEN

Lacey, didn't you hear me? Repetition, stick to the repetition.

LACEY

Well I've... Already repeated "hat" so much, I thought I'd move on to --

ELLEN

Don't think. Just be consistent. That child has enough challenges as it is.

The other mothers stir uncomfortably. Lacey gives an earnest nod. Then gets back to work on "hat". Karen stands.

KAREN

Okay... Who wants juice?

ELLEN

It's not time for a break yet...

KAREN

It is for me. Anyone?

AMBER

I'll have some.

LACEY

Me too. Thanks Karen.

Karen walks away toward the snacks. Ellen tries to catch Lacey's eye. Still focused on Eva, Lacey is oblivious.

TANYA

Oh, has anyone heard from Bev?

AMBER

Yep. Still at her mom's up in Maryville.

KAREN

Oh God. Poor thing.

AMBER

Mm. Can't believe Jack did that to her.

KAREN

Not because of Jack, "poor thing" because of Maryville. Have you been?

A few mothers giggle. Lacey continues to work on "hat".

ELLEN

Ladies, can we focus?

TANYA

Did he ever admit?

AMBER

Finally. But she knew anyway.

TANYA

How?

AMBER
You'll never believe it. She had
suspected something was up for a while --

TANYA
Why?

KAREN
If you were married to Bev, you'd cheat.

ELLEN
What is that supposed to mean?

KAREN
Yes, you would be the one to defend her.
(Off of Ellen's look)
No offense, Ellen, but you and Bev can
both be a little... Intense.

ELLEN
Excuse me?

KAREN
The whole perfect-mommy thing, the Baby
Einstein, the black-and-white nursery,
you take it all way too seriously. No
biggie, but... It can be a little hard
to be around, for anyone. Jack included.

AMBER
Ladies...

Lacey takes a break from the baby signing. Joins the chat.

TANYA
Yes, can we get back to Bev? Please?
(To Amber)
Why did she suspect?

AMBER
I don't know. He had gotten distant, was
suddenly spending lots of time "at work".
But nothing solid, right? So Bev starts
surfing web sites devoted to, you know,
catching a cheat. And a lot of the signs
were there. But the clincher was...

Amber pauses for effect.

AMBER (CONT'D)
He insisted on doing his own laundry.

TANYA
What?

LACEY
Wow. Very smart.

AMBER

(To Tanya)

Yeah, think about it. Perfume, lipstick.
It's supposedly one of the top signs.

KAREN

And it is a pretty odd thing for a man to
volunteer to do. Right up there with
going to baby showers.

Tanya suddenly inhales.

TANYA

Was that on the list too?

A few mothers giggle.

TANYA (CONT'D)

What. Lane likes them. Now I'm worried.

LACEY

Tanya, Lane's not cheating. Gay, maybe.

The building laughter takes the last of the mothers away from
the signing work. Ellen gives up.

Lacey looks back down at Eva. Does a quick "hat" repetition.

Her work pays off: Eva touches the top her head to mimic the
"hat" sign. Lacey is floored. Eva gurgles happily at her.

Lacey grins back, newly spellbound by the child.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - MORNING

*We pick up Devon's side eight days after we last saw her
in the welfare office*

DEVON: EIGHT DAYS LATER

Thursday, February 22, 2007

Devon shops for groceries. Her parka is unzipped. The top
third of her fly is unbuttoned to accommodate her increasing
girth. In one hand is a shopping basket. It contains four
packs of gum, a bag of Bugles, and a bright orange Hostess
cupcake. She's perusing the beer fridge.

She grabs a six-pack of Coors. Pops open a can without
removing it from the pack. Holds the pack up to her face.
Slurps from the open can, spilling some.

CLERK (O.S.)

Hey. No drinking that in here.

DEVON

Sorry. One sec.

CLERK (O.S.)

Don't give me "sorry". You do it every
time you come in here. In the basket.

DEVON

Okay, okay. Untwist the knickers.

She complies. Wipes her mouth. Walks to the register.

CLERK

Why not just take the can out of the pack first? Easier to sneak that way.

DEVON

Sneak? I'm trying to keep your life interesting, dude. Without me you'd die of boredom back there.

No response. The clerk has a look of horror on his face.

DEVON (CONT'D)

What. What'd I say...

The clerk points at Devon's crotch.

Devon looks down. Inhales sharply. Drops her basket. The groceries tumble across the floor.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Oh my God...

Below her partially open fly, blood spreads across the crotch of her jeans. Color drains from her bewildered face as the crimson blossom grows ever wider.

INT. JOE & LACEY'S DINING ROOM - EVENING

We pick up Lacey's side two days before we last saw her teaching Eva baby sign language during play group

LACEY: TWO DAYS EARLIER

Sunday, January 13, 2008

Lacey is surrounded by scrapbooking materials: Albums, photos, papers, wires, pinking shears, and dozens of doodads of unknown use and origin. She is obsessing over an ornate layout featuring photos of Eva's first Christmas.

37-week-old Eva sits in her high chair. Lacey turns from her scrapbook to give her a bottle of pumped breast milk.

Joe walks in with a cup of coffee. He notices the bottle:

JOE

Can I give it to her?

Lacey smiles a yes. Joe removes Eva from her chair. Sits. Begins to give her the bottle. Lacey removes the tray from Eva's chair. Goes to the sink. Begins scrubbing it.

In Joe's arms, Eva suckles contentedly. He absorbs her every move, grins at each hiccup. He glances over at the layout.

JOE (CONT'D)
This is amazing, hon.

LACEY
You think so?

JOE
Yeah. You could be a graphic designer.
None of our company stuff is this good.

With his free hand he eagerly flips to the pregnancy pages.

LACEY
I'm so glad you like looking at it.

JOE
Mm. Makes me feel like I was there.

She smiles. Covers the tray with thick, cling-formula beach.

JOE (CONT'D)
One of the admins on the project is
pregnant. She's huge, early on. Funny
how some women carry it differently...

LACEY
A girl at the office here?

JOE
No no, in Chicago at the site. Maria.
And she knew that she was pregnant, like,
after two weeks. Amazing, right?

She nods.

JOE (CONT'D)
I love this first picture of you and Eva.
So sweet. Too bad the framing is off...

LACEY
Hon, she was a doula, not a photographer.

JOE
Oh, did you ever track her down again?

She inspects the tray. Then douses it with rubbing alcohol.

LACEY
The doula? Nope, phone's still cut off.
Nobody at the clinic's heard from her.

JOE
Hmp. Thinking of Maria's big old belly
makes me wish I had been around to feel
yours. Talk to it. Kiss it. How come
we don't have a pictures of it in here?

LACEY

Well, Joey, I... I guess not every woman feels earthy and glowing and beautiful when she's pregnant. Maybe most don't.

JOE

Mm.

LACEY

You know I had... Baby blues. Even during, not just postpartum. Nobody wants their picture taken like that.

Joe nods, still absorbed in the scrapbook.

JOE

You know, since you had such a hard time with this one, for the next one we could always look at adopting.

LACEY

What?

She stops scrubbing. Her tone makes Joe proceed cautiously.

JOE

Yeah... One of the foremen and his wife just got two little girls from Guatemala.
(Off of Lacey's expression)
Honey? You okay? What's going on?

A moment.

LACEY

I'm... Fine, I'm fine.
(Upbeat)
You... You'd have an adopted child?

JOE

Yeah. Why wouldn't I? A baby's a baby.

LACEY

I... No reason. You don't think a biological baby is... Special somehow? I thought you did. I thought you --

JOE

Of course I do. No baby's more special than this baby. But, you know, there are a lot of kids out there who need love.

Lacey nods, lost in thought. Then brightens up. She walks to him. Puts her arms around him.

LACEY

You're a good man. Do you know that? That's why I need you home.

JOE

I am home.

LACEY

No, not just weekends, really home. To stay. No more Chicago. Can't you do that for me? For Eva? Can't you?

A moment.

JOE

I'm not sure that it's the right time.

He hands Eva to her. And abruptly walks out.

She's stunned by his response. She sits. Tries to shake it off, to distract herself with her scrapbooking layout. But it's no use. She pushes it aside.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - AFTERNOON

We pick up Devon's side just four hours after we last saw her collapsing in the convenience store

DEVON: FOUR HOURS LATER

Thursday, February 22, 2007

Devon is lying awake in a hospital bed. Sara walks in.

SARA

Hello, stranger. See what happens when you skip my appointments?

No response.

SARA (CONT'D)

The medics said they nearly had to use a buzz saw to remove those pants. You try to wear civilian clothes much longer and your jeans are gonna explode. No joke. People on the other side of the street are going to die from the shrapnel.

Devon's face is blank, her voice free of emotion.

DEVON

Enough with the wannabe bedside comedy. Was it a miscarriage?

SARA

Do you want it to be?

No response. Sara switches tactics.

SARA (CONT'D)

I have two helpings of good news and two of bad. Which do you want first?

DEVON

Neither. I want the doctor.

SARA

And I want a husband to sing me to sleep at night. Do you want to hear or not?

A moment.

DEVON

The good news.

SARA

Is that your baby is fine.

Sara closely watches Devon's reaction. There is none.

SARA (CONT'D)

But. You have an ovarian teratoma -- a kind of tumor, partly solid, partly cystic. Dr Kovic doesn't feel that we need to take it out right away, but...

(More serious)

There is a small chance it's malignant. So we'll keep monitoring it. If it doesn't cause problems, we'll remove it at the same time we deliver your baby via C-section. Do you know what that is?

DEVON

You think I'm stupid?

SARA

I don't know. Maybe. If you know what a C-section is, then you know that's the other bad news: No natural childbirth.

DEVON

You call that bad news?

SARA

It is to some.

DEVON

What's the other good news?

SARA

The bleeding you experienced? It wasn't from the teratoma. You also have a condition called placenta previa. It's when the placenta implants abnormally low, too close to the internal opening of the uterine cervix. Sometimes they hemorrhage. Yours did. Pretty badly.

DEVON

An ovarian tumor, and a blood-soaked uterus. And that's good news?

SARA

Definitely. It was because of the bleeding that Dr Kovic ordered the exploratory ultrasound.

(MORE)

SARA (CONT'D)
Which revealed your teratoma. Do you see?

(Pointedly)
We found the tumor because of your baby.

No response. Sara finally loses her cool.

SARA (CONT'D)
So are you happy? That your baby's alive, that you're gonna be okay? Or could you give a God-damn?

Devon stares blankly out the window at the darkening sky.

INT. DR SOLER'S OFFICE - MORNING
We pick up Lacey's side eleven weeks before we last saw her with Joe and the scrapbook

LACEY: ELEVEN WEEKS EARLIER
Monday, October 29, 2007

Dressed as a fairy princess, Eva reclines in Lacey's lap. Dr Soler is pondering an elaborate arrangement of cut fruit on black skewers -- orange melon, white pineapple, garnished with black licorice. Handmade black paper bats hover above.

DR SOLER
I don't often get gift baskets.
Especially for Halloween. Thank you.

LACEY
Well I know how easy it is to forget to eat right when you're busy. Plus, I tend to mother everybody all the time lately.

DR SOLER
Then you're right on schedule.

Dr Soler sets the arrangement aside. Picks up a chart.

DR SOLER (CONT'D)
Eva, however, is a little behind. At 26 weeks she's right at the 10th percentile in length, just over the 5th in weight. Are you supplementing with formula?

LACEY
I didn't think I needed to. I knew she was below normal from my daily charts...

She rummages through her bag. Locates her charts.

LACEY (CONT'D)
But I didn't think that much --

Lacey extends her charts toward Soler. Soler ignores them. She's busy flipping through a heavy volume.

DR SOLER

Do we need to put you on something?
Oxytocin will increase the "let-down".
But I'll bet the problem is inadequate
production in which case domperidone.
Intravenous... Tablet... Right. Still
not approved in the U.S. But we can
probably find a compounding pharmacy that
repackages the tablet form. If we did
three times a day, you should see some --

LACEY

I don't need drugs, doctor, I prefer to --

DR SOLER

I need to be the one to decide that.

Lacey stares at her, speechless.

DR SOLER (CONT'D)

This is not negotiable. I expect all of
my mothers to give my instructions top
priority. It's especially important now,
when the infant has gone for what, six
months without adequate pediatric care.

LACEY

Doctor, I... She's been under my care.

DR SOLER

Which is inadequate. Isn't that why you
finally chose to come to me?

LACEY

No, a... A friend told me I'd need help.
And I decided she was right.

DR SOLER

She was.

LACEY

And you're recognized as the best in the
field. So I value your opinion.

DR SOLER

You're missing the bigger picture: Your
practice was not only not specialized in
pediatrics, it was at a public clinic.

The doctor's insinuation leaves Lacey reeling.

LACEY

We... A lot of good work is done in the
public health setting, Doctor.

DR SOLER

But none of the *best* work is.

A moment.

DR SOLER (CONT'D)

No doubt, choosing that sort of career is commendable. But settling for that level of care for your child, unless it's your only option, is most definitely not.

Lacey can't deny the logic. Nor the question it begs: Has she been remiss, not just in caring for Eva herself, but in choosing to practice for so long at the clinic?

DR SOLER (CONT'D)

And because Eva was delivered at home, with what, a doula? You didn't even have the benefit of the basics: Electronic fetal monitoring, pit drip --

LACEY

We opted for... For intermittent auscultation of the heart rate with a fetoscope, and there... There's doubt as to whether the pit drip is worth --

DR SOLER

Then where's the auscultation data on her labor-and-delivery chart? And who did the monitoring? The doula? You?

The onslaught overtakes Lacey. She slumps in her chair.

A moment. The doctor's tone softens.

DR SOLER (CONT'D)

Lacey...

Lacey sits very still. Then begins a confession.

LACEY

I can't, um...

Soler watches Lacey very closely.

LACEY (CONT'D)

I have to... I have to tell someone...

DR SOLER

Tell someone what.

A long moment.

LACEY

Doctor, I... I...

DR SOLER

Yes, Lacey?

Lacey looks down at Eva. Then away. She inhales deeply. Then sits upright. Looks the doctor in the eye.

LACEY

I think I'm suffering from depression.

A moment.

DR SOLER

I think so too. How are things at home?

LACEY

Why... Do you ask?

DR SOLER

This condition is often exacerbated by an unhealthy domestic situation.

LACEY

It's fine, he... Joe would have been here today but he works during the week in Chicago... He's a good father...

Lacey's head drops.

DR SOLER

I can recommend a terrific psychiatrist.

LACEY

Thank you doctor, I have someone to see.

DR SOLER

You're not going to self-prescribe...

LACEY

No no. I won't. I promise.

DR SOLER

I hope not. And you did the right thing bringing Eva to me now. That's the important thing. So, where were we...

Soler returns to Eva's charts.

LACEY

Thank you doctor. Thank you.

Lacey looks out the window. Smiles to herself.

INT. DEVON'S APARTMENT - TWILIGHT

We pick up Devon's side four days after we last saw her in the hospital room with Sara

DEVON: FOUR DAYS LATER

Monday, February 26, 2007

Devon is lying on her bed, in sweats and fuzzy slippers. She is anxious, not sure what to do with herself. She strokes her belly. Reaches over and hits the speaker button on her phone. Dials a number.

WOMAN'S VOICE (RECORDED)

Hi. Sorry I couldn't answer in person.

She changes her mind. Tries to hang up. Hits the wrong button. Panics. Scrambles to find the right button.

WOMAN'S VOICE (RECORDED)
(CONT'D)

Please take a moment to say hello and --

She is relieved to finally find it. She nervously strums her night stand with her fingers. Lies back. Looks at her fingers. They're covered with dirt from the night stand.

DEVON

Ew.

She darts to the kitchen. Comes back with a rag.

She gives the night stand a quick dusting. Looks around the room. Frowns. Sticks her tongue out: Blech.

Back to the kitchen. She pulls cleaning supplies from the cupboards. Along with a bottle of scotch. She reflexively pours herself a shot. Reaches for the glass.

She stops. Frowns with discomfort. Lifts her shirt. Rubs her distended belly. Contemplates it. Her frown melts away.

She eyes her shot glass. Strokes her belly. Eyes the glass. Then quickly tosses the contents down the drain.

She exhales profoundly. Pauses. Looks around.

CUT TO:

Turning the bottle of scotch, another of wine, another of vodka, and four cans of Coors upside down into the sink.

CUT TO:

Going through a bathroom drawer. She finds the blue Ziploc bag from Mario. She smiles -- thought she'd lost it. Then remembers what she's doing. She reluctantly flushes it.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Dick.

She empties a cluttered ashtray into the toilet, too. Then chucks it in the garbage, along with the stale potpourri.

She finds the empty pregnancy test kit box. Looks at it wryly. Tosses it into the trash. Then empties the trash into a white plastic convenience-store shopping bag.

CUT TO:

Standing at her sewing machine. She exhumes it from its grave of accumulated junk. Stuffs the junk into white plastic bags. Blows the dust off the machine. Eyes a bolt of fabric that is resting on it. Folds it carefully.

CUT TO:

The trash chute. Bag after bag goes in.

CUT TO:

Scrubbing the bathroom counter, mirror, toilet. Behind her a hot bath is pouring. She rummages under the sink for bubble bath. Finds a baggie of pot, including a half-smoked joint. She holds the baggie over the toilet.

CUT TO:

Lowering herself into the bath. Her belly rises above the water line. On her belly she sets the ashtray, rescued from the trash can. She draws smoke from the joint. Savors it.

There's a knock at the door. She freezes. Then whispers:

DEVON (CONT'D)

Fuck.

She wraps a towel around herself. Proceeds cautiously toward the front door. Stops a few feet away from it.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Mario?

No response.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Who is it?

Still none. She moves to the door. Peers through the peephole. No one. She opens the door. Glances down. Something is resting against the wall. She picks it up.

It's wrapped in BevNaps. She tears it open: "The Baby Book: Everything You Need to Know About Your Baby".

DEVON (CONT'D)

Hm.

She opens the book. Inside is a "card", actually a bar coaster. She reads it silently. Then smiles broadly.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Ben.

She beams. Lost in thought, she slowly closes the door.

INT. BOOK STORE - DAY

We pick up Lacey's side fifteen days before we last saw her confessing to Dr Soler

LACEY: FIFTEEN DAYS EARLIER

Sunday, October 14, 2007

Lacey is in a light sweater. A shopping basket hangs from her arm. Joe walks next to her. 24-week-old Eva, in a hand-knit beanie, is strapped to his front.

JOE

Why are we here?

LACEY

Time to start her on solids. We need to research the professional consensus.

JOE

Can I hit the magazines? I need to research the professional consensus on the National League pennant race.

LACEY

I... Thought we'd do this as a family.

Joe gives a look that says: Not the "as a family" guilt.

The text-message tone on his cell phone goes off. He turns the tone off without looking at the phone.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Please, Joey. It's... Important to me.

JOE

Okay. Solids here we come.

She smiles. Finds the "Parenting & Family" aisle. A young FATHER is there perusing the books, his INFANT in a stroller.

Lacey locates the right shelf. There are many options. She extracts a title. Reads the cover to Joe:

LACEY

"An incredible gift for parents who care..." Well, we care...

No response. She opens to the inside cover.

LACEY (CONT'D)

"Despite your best efforts, you may end up helping to weaken, rather than strengthen, your child's immune system. Most of the principles we all learned in school are incorrect or inappropriate."

JOE

Sounds good, let's get it.

The text-message tone again. She frowns.

LACEY

Who *is* that?

JOE

The site, who else. But they can figure it out themselves. For once.

She smiles. Flips open a second book.

LACEY

"Putting infants on feeding schedules is wrong. Letting toddlers graze for food is wrong. Making preschoolers eat their vegetables to get dessert is wrong."

She exhales sharply. Grabs a third book.

The text-message tone yet again.

JOE

Sorry, hon. I'll go make this go away.

LACEY

Okay... Hurry back...

He turns the corner away from her. She reads silently.

The father with the stroller takes a step toward Lacey.

FATHER IN BOOK STORE

Here's another doozy: "Studies from my own laboratory taught me that, contrary to the advice in the parenting books, the foods my daughter would eat during the first months and years of life would have long-lasting -- and in some cases permanent -- effects."

LACEY

"Contrary to the advice in the parenting books"? Isn't that a parenting book?

They share a smile.

FATHER IN BOOK STORE

So which one's right? They can't all be.

LACEY

Well, I... Don't know. And I went to medical school. I mean, these aren't peer-reviewed, they're just published.

FATHER IN BOOK STORE

Uh-huh. I guess I'll just get this one.

Lacey peers at the book in the man's hand. He gives Lacey a smile and walks away.

Lacey scans the shelves for the book that the man was holding. Finds it. Gives it a gander. Then looks back at the stack of the other three books that she had read from.

She dumps all four books into her basket. Marches off.

She passes the "Pregnancy & Childbirth" section. Stops. A book has caught her eye: "Depression in New Mothers".

She grabs it. Absorbs the cover. Tosses it in her basket.

She searches the store. Spies Joe in an aisle by himself. He's grinning, putting away his cell phone. She goes to him.

JOE
Why so many? Solids that complicated?

LACEY
Apparently. Everything okay at the site?

JOE
Oh yeah, yeah, just, you know, putting out fires. Why I get the big bucks.

She moves in for a kiss. He complies, wide-eyed.

JOE (CONT'D)
Where'd that come from?

LACEY
What do you mean?

JOE
I thought you'd lost interest.

LACEY
I haven't lost interest...

She kisses him again. His eyes remain awkwardly open. She hugs him tightly. Then, tentatively, still in the hug:

LACEY (CONT'D)
Joey... You wouldn't...

JOE
What?

LACEY
Well you wouldn't ever... Look for someone else. Would you?

JOE
No. Why would you ask me that?

He pulls away. Scowls at her.

JOE (CONT'D)
Thanks for ruining the rare moment.

He walks off. Anxiety creeps across her face.

INT. MATERNITY SHOP - DAY

We pick up Devon's side eight days after we last saw her at her door finding the gift from Ben

DEVON: EIGHT DAYS LATER
Tuesday, March 6, 2007

Devon wanders the store in a denim jacket. Looks around. Every shelf is crammed full of tools, gifts, gadgets, aids.

DEVON

I'm in pastel hell.

She picks up an item. Fails to make sense of it. Then another. Shakes her head: Can't figure that one out either.

She scrams. Finds herself in the clothing section. Pulls a couple of maternity outfits off of the rack. Grimaces.

DEVON (CONT'D)

What are you, fucking kidding me? I could do better myself.

She walks away. Stops: She has an idea. She grabs a pen from her bag. Makes a quick sketch on her hand.

She flees to the book aisle. Stops next to a MOTHER and her CHILD. Picks up a book: "50,001 Best Baby Names". Her eyes widen. She flips through it. Starts making fun:

DEVON (CONT'D)

"Beatrice".

(To the mother)

Yeah, if you want your daughter to never have an orgasm in her entire life.

"Jenna"... Doomed to be a porn star.

And probably a damn good one.

"Roxanne"... Slut. "Vanessa"... Bitch.

"Daniel"... Hmmm. "Daniel".

Her face relaxes into a smile. Then hardens:

DEVON (CONT'D)

Please God, please let it be a boy.

Devon gives the mother a grin. The mother isn't amused.

MOTHER IN MATERNITY SHOP

(To her child)

Come on, Jenna.

Devon grimaces: Oops. Watches them go. They walk past...

Lacey, who is visible in the background.

She's evaluating nursing aids. Her hair is a bit longer than it was back when she was conducting Devon's ultrasound. Her pregnancy bulge, though small, is easily bigger than Devon's.

Devon doesn't see Lacey. She's too busy pawing around in her bag. She pulls out a bag of Bugles. Then catches herself. Slides the Bugles back in. Pulls out an apple instead. Looks around. And slips the book of names into her bag.

She takes a big bite of the apple. Walks toward the exit.

The shop owner appears behind Devon. And in a stern voice:

PHYLLIS

Excuse me.

Devon freezes. Eyes the exit.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)
We don't allow eating in the store.

Devon exhales, relieved. Heads for the door.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)
When are you due?

Devon pauses. Grins mischievously. Phyllis smiles back.

DEVON
Excuse me, ma'am?

PHYLLIS
Your baby. When's the due date?

An uncomfortable moment. Devon scowls.

DEVON
You bitch.

PHYLLIS
Excuse me?

Devon peers at her name tag. Then gets in her face.

DEVON
I'm not pregnant, Phyllis.

Devon walks away. Then stops. Turns to the woman.

DEVON (CONT'D)
You know, Phyl? It's because of women
like you that girls like me turn bulimic.

She turns and strides out, grinning all the way.

INT. JOE & LACEY'S HOME - NIGHT

*We pick up Lacey's side nine days before we last saw her
with Joe in the book store*

LACEY: NINE DAYS EARLIER
Friday, October 5, 2007

Lacey stands in the bathroom. Her demeanor is grim, manic. She is breathing heavily. Sweating. Blood bulges in her veins, blocked by the tourniquet wrapped above her elbow. She is giving herself an intravenous injection.

She's in a cotton tank and loose jersey pants. Her hair is held by a cotton headband. Yellow cleaning gloves rest on the sink, next to a cloth, a bottle of industrial antibiotic cleaner, another of bleach, a third of rubbing alcohol.

From another room, Eva screams. Lacey looks up, torn: She feels obligated to go to Eva. But she must finish this injection. She grits her teeth. Manages to complete it.

She unwraps the tourniquet. Bundles up the paraphernalia.
Buries the bundle under the sink in the back of the cabinet.

She dashes madly into the living room. 22-week-old Eva is on a mat, screaming. On the TV is the paused image of a WOMAN, clad just like Lacey, on a yoga mat, holding an INFANT GIRL. Lacey grabs the remote and the TV springs to life.

LACEY

Sorry, I'm sorry, I... Got distracted.

YOGA LADY (FILTERED)

... drop down into child's pose. Be sure to position your hands to stimulate svadistana, baby's second chakra...

Lacey squats. Places Eva as directed, next to a yoga pillow. Eva screams more loudly. Lacey tries to be upbeat.

LACEY

We're just gonna forget I... Got busy, okay? And focus on our yoga. Right?

DEVON

"Got busy"? Please. Why don't you tell her what you were doing in there?

Lacey turns suddenly, a look of great shock on her face. On the couch, above Eva, sits Devon. She's in tasteful, salmon-toned knitwear. Lacey is speechless, in a daze.

YOGA LADY (FILTERED)

... You could learn a lot from your baby about a healthy svadistana, your center of emotional and sensual movement...

DEVON

Svadiwhatta? This is fucking ridiculous.

Lacey stares at her, disoriented. Eva kicks, red-faced.

DEVON (CONT'D)

No, seriously, this is a riot. You could sell tickets. I wish I had popcorn.

LACEY

Why... Why are you here?

Devon gives a mocking smirk. She's enjoying Lacey's anxiety.

YOGA LADY (FILTERED)

... As svadistana strengthens, so will your ability to be open to pleasure, to learn how to go with the flow...

LACEY

(To Eva)

Little girl, please stop screaming at me.

Lacey abandons the yoga effort. Scoops Eva up. Joylessly bounces her up and down around the room. But Eva is inconsolable. She screams ever louder.

DEVON

Why don't you let me help quiet her?

LACEY

You scared me to death. Isn't that what you wanted? So go now. Please go.

(To Eva)

Please stop. Please stop crying.

DEVON

I'm telling you, I could show you how to shut her up. Two minutes, guaranteed.

LACEY

Please... Please don't make it harder. If you promise to go you can hold her. You could, you could even nurse her...

Devon gives a look that says: You're clueless.

DEVON

Could I now. Well, compared to you I almost could. I mean, come on, my fucking pet rat produced more milk.

The phone rings. Lacey finally erupts:

LACEY

Fuck off!

It rings two more times. Goes to the machine.

LACEY'S VOICE (RECORDED)

Sorry we couldn't take your call. Please leave a message for me or Joe. Or Eva.

JOE (FILTERED)

Hi. It's me. I'm at the hotel. Just returning your call --

Lacey scrambles to hit the speaker button.

LACEY

Hello? Joey? Joe?

JOE (FILTERED)

Hi.

Devon chimes in, in a mocking whisper:

DEVON

Awww, hi Joe-Joe.

Eva is still screaming. Lacey pats her robotically. And in her sweetest voice:

LACEY

Hi baby...

JOE (FILTERED)

Why is Eva crying?

LACEY

She bumped her head. Good flight?

JOE (FILTERED)

Oh yeah, just fine...

Again, in her mocking whisper:

DEVON

Let me say hi. I've never met him.

LACEY

What are you doing now?

JOE (FILTERED)

Unpacking. What else would I be doing?

LACEY

I don't know, just asking... So did you find my care package yet?

JOE (FILTERED)

What care package?

LACEY

I tucked a little something into your luggage to remind you of me. Keep you warm in that cold, lonely hotel room...

Devon mockingly sticks her finger down her throat.

Through the speaker phone comes the barely audible sound of a woman's voice.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Joe?

A moment.

JOE (FILTERED)

Yes, honey?

LACEY

Who's with you?

JOE (FILTERED)

Oh, some of my team is here. We're reviewing things for tomorrow.

LACEY

I thought you were unpacking...

JOE (FILTERED)
Well, you know, multitasking. Lots to
get ready for Saturday...

No response.

JOE (CONT'D)
Honey, I should go. Hard to talk with
Eva screaming like that. Bye honey.

LACEY
Okay, bye baby, I --

He's hung up. Her face falls.

She hangs up. Comforts Eva. Who wails more loudly.

DEVON
Well, well. Joe-Joe's got a girlfriend.

LACEY
No, you heard him. It's... A co-worker.

Devon raises an eyebrow: Yeah right.

With building frustration, Lacey processes the phone call,
Devon's presence, her own anger at Eva for the incessant
screaming, her anger at herself for getting angry at Eva.

She stoops down. Picks up the yoga pillow.

DEVON
Now we're talking.

LACEY
What?

DEVON
You want to shut her up. That's why you
grabbed the pillow. Isn't it?

Lacey looks down at the pillow. Too stunned to respond.

YOGA LADY (FILTERED)
... Now look into your baby's eyes. Be
mindful of the quiet bliss of the moment.
And let's begin our visualizations --

DEVON
And you were supposed to be the good one.

Lacey hits the remote. The TV screen goes dead.

Lacey stares helplessly at the still screaming child.

INT. BAR CHOOZY - NIGHT

*We pick up Devon's side sixteen days after we last saw
her striding out of the maternity shop*

DEVON: SIXTEEN DAYS LATER
Thursday, March 22, 2007

It's a decently busy night. A blonde barfly prances flirtatiously in front of Ben. He slides a drink to her.

BARFLY

Thanks Benji.

He nods. Turns to speak to his other barman, DAVE.

BEN

Dave, you wanna cut us up more limes?

DEVON (O.S.)

Hey big daddy.

Ben looks up. Smiles. Notes that she's quite drunk.

BEN

Damnedest waitress I ever saw. Only shows up when she's not on the schedule.

DEVON

Shut up! I wanted to see you.

BEN

Well m'lady, I am truly honored. Hey...

He notices her outfit. It's maternity wear -- it has to be at this point -- but unique, edgy, streetwise.

BEN (CONT'D)

Looking good. I like.

DEVON

Really? I made it myself.

She's extra-drunken-pleased by his compliment. She models it for him: Lifts her arms, turns. Then spots her date.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Mario Mario, Ben likes my outfit. Isn't that sweet? Isn't he the sweetest?

MARIO

(To Ben)

Yo.

Ben nods an acknowledgment. No love lost between these two.

BEN

(To Devon)

What'll you have? Seltzer? Coke? Milk?

DEVON

Oh come onnn... One last night of fun before the baby comes.

He shakes his head. Fills a glass with ice, then seltzer.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Pleeease? I almost have cancer...

He slides the glass toward her.

BEN
You don't have cancer. You have seltzer.

DEVON
Ohhh...

BEN
You'll live.

Mario hands her a shot. Devon mouths a silent "Yaaay!"

DEVON
Mean man Ben wouldn't give me one.

MARIO
That's why you're with me, baby. I know
how to give you what you want.

He wraps an arm around her. Kisses her in a forced display
of eroticism. Walks her away to the other end of the bar.

She doesn't want to leave Ben. But waves him bye-bye.

MARIO (CONT'D)
Why do you hang with that loser?

DEVON
Shut up. He's nice.

With his free hand he violently grabs her face.

MARIO
What'd I say about telling me that.

DEVON
Sorry.

MARIO
Down your drink.

She does. Then gives a look that says she's had enough.

MARIO (CONT'D)
So you really gonna have this kid?

DEVON
I guess so.

MARIO
What the fuck for?

DEVON
I don't know.

MARIO
You sure it's mine?

DEVON
Yes. I already told you.

MARIO
It fucking better be. You get me?

DEVON
Yes, Mario. Jeez.

He turns to Dave, the other bartender.

MARIO
A beer for me and a shot of bourbon for
her. Make it a double.

A hand appears on Mario's shoulder.

BEN (O.S.)
Don't, Dave. She's had enough.

Mario turns. Knocks Ben's hand off of his shoulder.

BEN (CONT'D)
Get out of my bar. Now.

MARIO
Fuck you.

Mario weighs his chances. Decides to go. Grabs Devon.

MARIO (CONT'D)
Come on.

Ben grabs Mario's arm, the one he's holding Devon with.

BEN
She's staying.

Mario shoves Ben hard. Ben responds with a hook. Mario
stumbles backward. Then charges back, swinging. Ben ducks.
Hurls a fist into Mario's gut. Mario doubles over. A scary,
volatile, violent side of Ben shows itself.

BEN (CONT'D)
Want a little more, you fucking scum?

He grabs Mario's head. Pulls it down into his knee, once,
twice. Mario goes down, his face a bloody mess. Ben grabs
his collar. Pulls his head off the floor. And viciously:

BEN (CONT'D)
You come anywhere near her again, I will
fucking shred you. You got that?

He drops Mario's head to the floor. Rubs his fist.

Devon looks at Ben, stunned. Mario staggers to his feet. Ben stiffens. Clenches his fists. Mario watches warily.

MARIO
(To Devon)
You stay here... You're history.

Devon's eyes dart back and forth between the two. She hesitates. Then goes to Ben. Turns away from Mario. Mario stares in disbelief. Spits at her. Struts out.

BEN
Dave. Bar's yours. Gimme five.

He puts an arm around Devon. Walks her to the back room.

He sits her down. Puts a coat around her. Pours her a cup of coffee. Tenderly strokes her cheek.

BEN (CONT'D)
You're just a little girl, you know that?

DEVON
Fuck you... I'm not...

She sips her coffee. Looks up at him. He returns her gaze. She sets the cup down. Hesitates for a moment. Then leans in. He responds. They kiss briefly, softly. He looks at her. Grins. Hands her her coffee.

BEN
Gotta get back to the bar. Finish that.

He gives her a smile. Walks out. She drains the cup.

She stands, very wobbly. Walks back to the main room. Looks for Ben. Spots him near the bar. The blonde barfly is lavishing attention on him. He's clearly enjoying it.

Devon's face falls. Then turns angry. She scans the room. Spots a GUY near the back. Sizes him up. Walks over to him.

DEVON
Hi.

He nods an acknowledgment.

DEVON (CONT'D)
You wanna get out of here?

His eyes widen. He spots her belly. Grins wickedly.

GUY FROM BAR
Absolutely.

INT. A LIVING ROOM - MORNING
We pick up Lacey's side sixteen days before we last saw her giving up on the mother-and-child yoga

LACEY: SIXTEEN DAYS EARLIER

Wednesday, September 19, 2007

A play group, in the midst of "tummy time". Mothers -- a few recognizable from the previous play group scene -- are strewn about, coaxing their infants to roll over or play with toys. All of the infants are between about 16 and 22 weeks.

Eva is in Lacey's arms. At 20 weeks, she is older than most. But easily the smallest in the group.

Some of the moms are fit, and sport snug clothing. Others still have their pregnancy pudge, and wear sweats. Each is keenly aware of her shape relative to the others.

Lacey's in great shape. And trying to look happy, confident. But this is her first time out among other mothers: She's nervous, restless. She clasps Eva like a security blanket.

She steals glances around the room: One mother laughs delightedly as her son rolls onto his back, all fists and giggles. Another gazes dreamily into her little girl's eyes, sharing Eskimo kisses and soft coos all the while.

Fully of envy, Lacey looks down at Eva. Awkwardly nuzzles her. Eva stiff-arms her. Lacey deflates. But this group is everything she wanted. So she fakes a smile. Gives it a go.

She sits near TWO MOTHERS, who happily chat as their INFANTS play on the floor. She puts Eva in her lap.

MOTHER 1

And Jared actually gets into it?

MOTHER 2

He loves it.

They notice Lacey, who musters a radiant smile.

MOTHER 2 (CONT'D)

What was your name again?

LACEY

Lacey. And this is Eva. And you are...

MOTHER 2

My God, you look like you were never even pregnant. I so wish I had my shape back.

MOTHER 1

Have you been hitting the gym like crazy? Or did you adopt?

The two mothers giggle. Lacey decides to do so also.

LACEY

What were you just talking about?

MOTHER 2

Oh, the DVD. "The New Method, Baby and Mom Yoga", I think it's called. It's amazing. It makes me feel so connected to him. Like I was during his birth.

Lacey tries to speak. But is beat to the punch.

MOTHER 1

A connected birth? Please. Sounds nice, but, yeah, nine-and-a-half pounds? Gimme my drugs. And wake me up when it's over.

LACEY

(To Mother 2)

You had him naturally?

MOTHER 2

Mm. I had the epidural with my first. My body felt like a sack of potatoes. After that I swore never again.

Lacey interjects, very animatedly:

LACEY

Yes. The contractions are so intensely creative. And there's nothing like that full physical experience, pain and all, to, I don't know, increase the bond. You know, your hormones are peaking and your child is on your breast for the very first time. It's so connecting.

Mother 1 stares at Lacey. Mother 2 looks away.

MOTHER 1

What, did you read that somewhere?

More giggling. Lacey's face falls. Mother 2 notices. Switches into damage-control mode. Kindly, to Lacey:

MOTHER 2

Don't mind her, she's off her meds. Did you do a hospital birth, or... Lacey?

Lacey has checked out. She stares blankly at the floor.

LACEY

Excuse me...

Lacey grabs her baby bag, then Eva. And walks straight out.

Ellen notices. Asks a mom to watch Travis. Follows Lacey.

ELLEN

Lacey? Lacey wait.

Lacey stops, under leaves not quite ready to turn.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

What's going on? Why are you leaving?

LACEY

Oh, we just... Forgot an appointment.

Lacey is quite disturbed, her smile long gone.

ELLEN

Okay, the real reason.

LACEY

I just... Don't think it's for us.

ELLEN

Why not? What on Earth happened?

LACEY

Well... It's just, um... I don't know, gossipy. And... The boy-to-girl ratio is off. And the, um... Never mind...

ELLEN

No. The um what? Come on Lace...

Lacey looks away. After a moment she looks at Ellen.

LACEY

Look, it's me. This is too soon. I had a really hard time after she was born. I thought I was ready but... I'm just not.

ELLEN

No. You're fine. I'm so glad you came.

(Off of Lacey's look)

It's not you. It's the group. I agree: Changes need to be made. See, I knew it'd be good to bring you in. I mean, you had a career, you know...

LACEY

Well that is --

ELLEN

Right now it's a hen club, right? Like I care about whose husband Linda thinks is a cheater or what diet is working this week for Amber or the kind of tile what's her face is about to redo her foyer in.

LACEY

Well I --

ELLEN

So let's partner up. Make some changes. Give it a structure, make it helpful, substantial. Right? Don't abandon me, Lacey, help me. Let's remake this group.

Lacey hesitates.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Come on, what do you say? Sister...

Lacey's lips purse. She weighs the offer heavily...

INT. GUY FROM BAR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

We pick up Devon's side just one hour after we last saw her leaving with the guy from the bar

DEVON: ONE HOUR LATER

Friday, March 23, 2007

Devon stands awkwardly, still drunk.

The guy from the bar walks in from his bathroom. He's fully naked. There's a potent, gamey quality about him.

He grabs her arm and pulls her toward the bed.

GUY FROM BAR

What are you waiting for?

She pulls her arm back. He shrugs. Gets into bed. Stares hard at her. She nervously strokes her belly.

GUY FROM BAR (CONT'D)

What are you, some cock tease?

DEVON

Hell no.

GUY FROM BAR

Then get your ass over here.

She does as she's told. Stands next to the bed.

GUY FROM BAR (CONT'D)

Get your clothes off.

DEVON

I... I'm pregnant.

GUY FROM BAR

No shit, so what? Maybe I'll get lucky and the kid'll blow me while I'm fucking you. Get your clothes off.

She strips. Climbs into bed. She tries to get on top. He flips her on her side to penetrate her from behind.

GUY FROM BAR (CONT'D)

That's more like it.

He enters her roughly. She grimaces. He thrusts. Does not kiss her: He's not here for that. She endures for a moment.

DEVON

You think I'm beautiful, don't you.

GUY FROM BAR

What?

She doesn't respond. He continues thrusting.

DEVON

You think you're the luckiest --

GUY FROM BAR

Shut the fuck up.

DEVON

Fuck you.

He reaches around and slaps her hard.

DEVON (CONT'D)

You asshole!

She struggles to get away from him. He holds her in place. Laughs scornfully. Thrusts more violently.

GUY FROM BAR

Not till I'm done with you.

She gives in to him. Seems to enjoy it. She twists her torso toward him. Eyes him seductively. Moans softly.

GUY FROM BAR (CONT'D)

Oh yeah. Mama likes it rough, does she?

With her lower arm she makes a fist. Sends it flying as hard as she can up into the tip of his nose.

He screams. Rolls off. Covers his face with his hands.

GUY FROM BAR (CONT'D)

You fucking cunt.

She scrambles off of the bed. He goes after her. Grabs her. Draws a fist back. Punches her in the face. She goes down. He kicks her savagely. The sounds are graphically violent.

INT. JOE & LACEY'S HOME - TWILIGHT

We pick up Lacey's side eight weeks before we last saw her with Ellen after walking out of play group

LACEY: EIGHT WEEKS EARLIER

Thursday, July 26, 2007

Joe slides pieces of vegetables and meat onto skewers for a mid-summer barbecue. Folksy music plays. He pops a cherry tomato in his mouth. Takes a swig from his beer.

He walks back to the bedroom. Knocks delicately.

JOE

Honey? Lacey? You okay? You've been locked in there since I got home.

A moment.

Just a second. LACEY (O.S.)

Okay. JOE

He returns to the kitchen and his kabobs.

From behind, 12-week-old Eva babbles. He turns.

JOE (CONT'D)
Hey. What have you been doing?

Lacey's eyes are puffy, red. She clutches Eva absently.

LACEY
Jackie just called. From the clinic.

JOE
Right, you had lunch there, didn't you?

No response.

JOE (CONT'D)
Honey? Was it nice to see everyone?

No response. Lacey's mood grows darker by the second.

JOE (CONT'D)
Lacey?

LACEY
Why are you doing this to me?

JOE
Doing what to you?

No response.

JOE (CONT'D)
Honey, I'm just trying to find out --

LACEY
You're *pretending*. Like everything's fine. Why would you do that to me?

JOE
Everything *is* fine. Of course it is.

His tone grows tentative. Might not be the right time, but:

JOE (CONT'D)
Maybe you just... Need a hand. With things. What if your mom came to stay during the week, when I'm in Chicago?

LACEY

My mother can't solve this.
(Referring to Eva)
Don't you know I did this for you.

JOE

Did what, what are you talking about?

No response.

JOE (CONT'D)

You didn't do anything, we chose to have Eva, together, for us, not for me. And together we'll... Get it right.

LACEY

Stop trying to convince me! I know.

JOE

Lacey, honey, you're not making any sense. Or, you know it might help to...

LACEY

What.

JOE

Well... See someone. To talk to.

LACEY

I don't need my fucking head shrunk.

JOE

Not a shrink, a... Counselor. Just to get through these rough patches. When you're... Not thinking clearly, when --

LACEY

Oh I am thinking very clearly. I wasn't then but I am now. I am now.

JOE

Lots of women get overwhelmed, lose sight of what's, what's good. I've read about it. You, you must have had patients at the clinic who got depressed, who, who suffered from, what, what, post, postpartum --

LACEY

Don't talk to me about those women. You want to help me? Stop lying to me. This was wrong. You know it. I know it. She knows it. She knows. What was I thinking, oh my God what was I thinking?

Eva begins to cry. Lacey thrusts her toward him. He takes her, tries to soothe her. He's struggling to keep a grip. While Lacey inches ever closer to losing what's left of hers.

LACEY (CONT'D)

I swore I'd be better than them, Joe, I swore I would but I'm not, I'm not...

JOE

Better than who? Lacey I don't know what you're saying, you can be so wonderful --

LACEY

Don't you see, I'm a horrible person, I'm one of them Joe, please tell me you see, please tell me you'll never forgive me --

JOE

One of who!? Of course I will --

LACEY

One of those mothers. In that fucking place. You want to know how my lunch went? I sat in that God-forsaken clinic, for... I saw, one mother, she was so... She brought her baby, she was so fucked up she, she tried to nurse him but she passed out, she asphyxiated him, Joe...

She grows quiet, the eye of the storm. Then rages:

LACEY (CONT'D)

I never understood why those women were allowed to live... I still don't. I looked at her, I saw, I saw the truth, I saw it all. I saw me. That's how it went. I'm not better than them. I am one of them. Why am I allowed to live!?

She flees to the nursery. Slams the door. Locks it.

She wraps her arms around herself. Looks around, frantic. Lost. Terrified. She dissolves, unable to lie down, unable to touch anything, as though the very walls were toxic, as though a vortex were about to devour her from the inside.

He beats frantically on the door.

JOE (O.S.)

Honey!? What are you doing in there?
Lacey! Open the door!

Still within the vortex, she catches sight of the photo on the bureau: Her in Loretta's arms. She reaches out for it. Gazes at it, descends into it, gets lost in it. His pounding continues. But does not break the grip the photo has on her.

Her breathing grows slower, deeper. Her focus sharpens. A moment passes. And slowly, through great strength of will... She subdues herself. Gradually pushes the vortex back down.

He is frantic. He tries the doorknob.

JOE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Lacey!? Please answer me, please Lacey,
 talk to me! I need you to talk to me!

She smooths her hair. Wipes her eyes. Settles her face.
 Opens the door. He rushes in, holding Eva tight.

JOE (CONT'D)
 What's happening? Are you okay?

LACEY
 I'm fine.

She calmly takes Eva. And walks smoothly out.

He finally breaks down.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING
*We pick up Devon's side just seven hours after we last
 saw her being beaten by the guy from the bar*

DEVON: SEVEN HOURS LATER
 Friday, March 23, 2007

Devon is lying in a hospital bed. LAURA is changing the
 dressing on a gash above her eye.

Sara walks in. Stands beside Devon. Who turns her head
 away. Sara takes in her injuries. Then, angrily:

SARA
 Your tests were looking better. You were
 looking better. I thought you were
 finally pulling it together.

Laura makes an expression that asks: Do you want me to
 leave? Sara shakes her head. Laura continues.

SARA (CONT'D)
 What the hell are you doing? Killing
 yourself? Your blood alcohol content was
 point three. How you were even still
 alive to get beat up this bad I have no
 idea. Not to mention what that kind of
 drinking might have done to your child...
 Who did this to you, Devon?

No response. Laura finishes up. She shuffles out.

SARA (CONT'D)
 Devon, who was it?

No response.

SARA (CONT'D)
 Fine. Don't talk. Listen. I know what
 it's like to be you. To be young and
 stupid. To feel indestructible. But I
 know something you don't...

Sara's voice wavers.

SARA (CONT'D)

I know how it feels to snuff that light right out. To tell myself I'm fine, I don't need to change a thing. And then turn around and without even trying make the biggest mistake of my life and lose that little baby in a rush of blood from between my legs. I know what that's like. You don't. Yet.

Devon turns to Sara. She can barely speak.

DEVON

Why don't you wake up?

SARA

What did you say?

DEVON

You heard me. You think your tough-love act is gonna change a thing? Like you're some fairy godmother, gonna swoop in, wave your magic wand, and fix me? You can't even fix yourself, if you could you sure as hell wouldn't still be working here. Wake the fuck up, fairy godmother. Your magic wand is shooting blanks.

Sara takes this in for a long moment. Looks out the window. Grows very sad. Then moves slowly toward the door.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

INT. COMMUNITY HEALTH CLINIC - DAY

We pick up Lacey's side just seven hours before we last saw her breaking down in the nursery

LACEY: SEVEN HOURS EARLIER

Thursday, July 26, 2007

Dressed for heat, Lacey walks with JACKIE. Lacey is smiling. But nervous, distracted. She holds 12-week-old Eva stiffly.

JACKIE

You okay? You seem a little tense.

LACEY

No no, I'm fine. It's just... Surreal.

JACKIE

I bet. I so wish you were coming back.

LACEY

I think about it. I miss you girls. But six months away from this place is like... Six hours from anywhere else. And she'll only be a baby once.

JACKIE

I always knew you'd be such a great mom. You look like you never put her down.

They walk into the break room. DEB follows them. Lacey puts on an extra bright smile. Holds Eva up. Strokes her head.

DEB

Lacey! It's so great to see you. Things good? Motherhood treating you well?

LACEY

Deb! Oh absolutely. She's a dream. It's as wonderful as I thought it'd be.

DEB

You look amazing. She's so tiny. Must be why you showed so late. Lucky... Oh, and I have a surprise...

Deb turns to the door. Sara walks in.

LACEY

Oh my God! Sara! I thought you quit.

SARA

I did. Followed your lead, that's why the street clothes. Jackie said you'd be coming in with your little one, so...

Lacey starts, then quickly recovers, before anyone notices.

SARA (CONT'D)

I've got to be honest, though... I almost didn't make it. It's, um... My first time back. Pretty hard to be here.

Jackie and Deb exchange looks.

LACEY

I know *exactly* what you mean.

SARA

So this is Eva, huh? Hi little girl. Aren't you sweet. Aren't you precious.
(To Lacey)
She's beautiful. So tiny, so fragile. Score one for the good guys.

Lacey gives a conflicted smile. Sara wipes away a tear.

JACKIE

You okay?

SARA

I'm fine.

(To Lacey)

Don't mind me. I'm... A little emotional these days.

LACEY

I *totally* understand.

The door flies open. FELICIA's tone is very urgent.

FELICIA

Guys, emergency. Lunch'll have to wait.

JACKIE

What.

FELICIA

One of Ruby's moms, a shooter. Just staggered in with her baby, so high I don't know how she even managed to get here. The baby has agonal respirations.

Lacey goes pale. Jackie and Deb grow instantly alert.

JACKIE

What happened.

FELICIA

Not sure. But I need help. Now.

Jackie and Deborah switch into response mode.

JACKIE

Deb, call the police.

FELICIA

Already done.

JACKIE

Then make sure we've got a bed for the mom. Felic, let's figure out what the hell happened.

SARA

Can I... Do anything?

JACKIE

You two sit tight. Take care of your little girl. Aren't you sorry you left?

Jackie and Deb rush out behind Felicia.

By now, Lacey's tension has built into a panic. But she struggles valiantly not to let it show.

She anxiously holds Eva out to Sara.

LACEY

Do you want to...

SARA

Of course I do.

Sara takes her. Holds her tight. Looks at Lacey.

SARA (CONT'D)

I feel like we should be helping them...

No response. Sara gives Eva a joyful smile.

SARA (CONT'D)

Well, look at this pretty thing.

(To Lacey)

Funny how some babies feel right in your arms. Like you've known them for years.

No response.

SARA (CONT'D)

You okay? Lacey? You know, that baby still has a shot. And if it doesn't make it, well... It's in God's hands.

LACEY

It's not only that. It's... The mother. The women who come in here... I used to feel good helping them. Then they just made me feel... Better about my own life. Now they make me feel empty. Like anyone's a good mom compared to them.

SARA

Better about your own life.

Lacey nods.

SARA (CONT'D)

Then it's a good thing you quit.

Lacey gives a look that says: What do you mean?

SARA (CONT'D)

These women are just giving what they got. They need our help. To break that cycle. Not our judgement. They get enough of that outside these walls.

LACEY

It's... It's not about judgment. I'm just concerned for the babies, Sara.

SARA

For the babies.

LACEY

Yes. What?

Sara almost doesn't respond. Then, cautiously:

SARA

Well, Lacey... Lots of babies out there could use your help. You never seemed to be all that open to adopting any of them.

A moment. Then, also cautiously:

LACEY

That's a bit judgmental itself, no? And I can recall a few times when you weren't exactly overflowing with the milk of human kindness toward these women either.

A moment. A wave of emotion overcomes Sara.

SARA

You're right, I wasn't. And not a minute goes by that I don't regret those times with every last living cell in my body.

LACEY

Why, um... Why the change of heart?

SARA

Doesn't matter, it happened. Question is, why your change? You weren't always this hard. What's happened to you?

LACEY

Forty-eight, single, and childless, and what's happened to me?

SARA

Forty-six.

A moment. Lacey takes Eva back from Sara.

LACEY

I'm not hard, Sara. These women make bad choices. They don't have to, but they do. And if their kids get taken away as a result, I don't feel that bad for them. I just think: It's what's best for the baby. It's what's best for the baby.

SARA

Yeah, and maybe it is. But if you'd been born in the place of any of these women, would you do so much better? At least they've come here to get help. Proud as you are, would you even do *that* much?

No response.

SARA (CONT'D)

You give these women a chance, Lacey. You treat them with a little dignity, a little respect. Because in five years they could be you. Just as together. Loving their child just as much.

Lacey pauses. But Sara's words are too much for her. She marches with Eva out the door, back through the clinic.

She runs smack into Devon. Who's sitting patiently, wearing a soft pink blouse over white capri pants.

Devon smiles warmly. But the sight of her terrifies Lacey.

Lacey is in disbelief. She takes a step toward the exit. Then flies out the door as fast as she can.

INT. DEVON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

We pick up Devon's side ten days after we last saw her in the hospital room as Sara walked out

DEVON: TEN DAYS LATER

Monday, April 2, 2007

Devon stares at the book of baby names. A few bandages are still in place. Her wounds have not yet healed.

Before her rests a sonogram. Next to it, T's number and the lawyer's card. In one hand she holds a glass -- the contents aren't visible, but ice cubes clink. She wipes a tear away.

BEN

Please can you stop with the silent treatment? It's starting to get to me.

He is dressed up, in a nice shirt and new jeans.

BEN (CONT'D)

Are you gonna come back to work?

A moment. Devon's tone is remote, flat:

DEVON

No.

BEN

Why are you doing this?

No response.

BEN (CONT'D)

What did I do?

DEVON

Why do you think it's about you?

BEN

Isn't it?

DEVON

Jesus. No. Not everything is.

BEN

Then what?

DEVON
Doesn't matter.

A moment.

BEN
You still thinking about giving it up?

DEVON
Among other things.

BEN
What does that mean?

DEVON
Doesn't matter.

BEN
Could I help make it matter?

DEVON
Another fairy godmother. How do you think you could do that?

A moment.

BEN
I could...

She turns to him. He speaks to her softly:

BEN (CONT'D)
I could... Marry you.

Her look asks: Are you serious?

BEN (CONT'D)
Since my mom passed... It's just me. I like... Taking care of someone. I could take care of you. And the baby.

She shakes her head in disbelief.

BEN (CONT'D)
If you can see your way clear to keeping it... That's exactly what I'll do. If it's okay with you.

No response.

BEN (CONT'D)
And you've got two big surgeries coming up, right? The tumor, the Caesarean... You're gonna need someone.

A moment.

BEN (CONT'D)
You don't have to decide now or anything. It's an open offer.

She nods. Takes a swig of her drink. It's milk.

BEN (CONT'D)
I didn't know you liked that stuff.

DEVON
I don't.

A moment.

BEN
I'm gonna go. You need anything?

She shakes her head. Ben walks to her. Holds her. Kisses her forehead. She allows it. He moves to the door. Turns.

BEN (CONT'D)
I'm not saying that I love you. So don't freak out on me. I'm just saying that... Maybe... I could.

He turns to go. Walks to the door. Opens the door.

DEVON
Stop.

She goes to him. Looks up at him. Smiles nervously.

He smiles nervously back. Puts his hand around her neck. Pauses. Pulls her lips slowly, carefully toward his.

They kiss softly, gently. Then her old habits take over: She forces her tongue down his throat, wraps a leg around his, slides one hand up his shirt, the other on his crotch.

He plays along briefly. But it's wrong. He pulls away.

BEN
What... What are you doing?

Devon gives him a look that says: What do you think?

BEN (CONT'D)
I don't... That's not... What this is about... Every guy is that guy to you. I don't want to be that guy.

To her, his words are rejection. She's hurt. Lashes out:

DEVON
Every guy wants what I'm about to give you. Don't... Don't be such a fag.

Her response wounds him. He steps back. Shakes his head.

He walks quickly out. A moment. She runs to the door.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Ben --

He's gone. She closes the door. And for the first time, she cracks. The doubt, fear, insecurity that she's been holding at bay for weeks, years even, take hold.

In a building panic, she runs to the kitchen, throws open the refrigerator: Nothing. The cabinets: Nothing. The bathroom: Her baggie of marijuana doesn't hold enough even for a tiny hit. Her anxiety reaches a crescendo.

She grabs her phone. Hesitates. Dials a number.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Hello?

DEVON

Oh. Oh God. Hello?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Yes... Who is it?

DEVON

It's... Devon.

A long moment.

DEVON (CONT'D)

I have to see you.

INT. JOE & LACEY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

We pick up Lacey's side nineteen days before we last saw her at the clinic arguing with Sara

LACEY: NINETEEN DAYS EARLIER

Saturday, July 7, 2007

Lacey is in bed. She's not well. The great dark circles under her eyes contrast with the warm morning light.

10-week-old Eva sleeps by her side. A tiny nasal cannula runs across her face, feeding oxygen into her nostrils. A belt is wrapped around her torso, below her arms. Cords run from the belt to a sleep apnea monitor on the side table.

Lacey whispers into the cordless phone. She's careful not to wake Eva. But neither looks at nor touches her.

LACEY

It's too soon. Of course I want to see you, but -- She's too young, she won't even know what's going on... No, I'm fine. Nothing wrong. You know, why not -
- Yes, but maybe it's smarter to wait a little while till she's older... Of course that's what it's about.

A car pulls up.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Are you kidding me, he won't even notice.
If he's even in town. And he probably
won't be. He's home, I've gotta go...
I'm hanging up now... Me too. Bye.

The sound of keys in the lock, the front door opening.

JOE (O.S.)

I'm home, honey. You two still in bed?

The bedroom door opens. He walks in, wearing shorts and a T-shirt. A small, local newspaper is tucked under one arm.

LACEY

Is that a problem?

JOE

No! I'm glad. I brought you a surprise.

He produces a large shopping bag from behind his back. Withdraws a smaller bag from it.

JOE (CONT'D)

Chocolate croissants!

LACEY

In bed?

JOE

Why not. And...

He reaches into the larger bag. Produces a beautiful, handmade, pastel-painted mobile.

JOE (CONT'D)

This! Isn't it beautiful? Some local
girl makes them. They sell them in this
new little shop next to the bakery.

No response.

JOE (CONT'D)

You don't like it.

LACEY

It's not right for the nursery.

JOE

That's okay, we... Don't have to use it.
I'll just grab some plates and some OJ...

LACEY

Not now. I'll have some later.

JOE

Oh. Okay...

He grins flirtatiously.

JOE (CONT'D)

Why? Something you'd rather do in bed?

A grin spreads across his face. She doesn't respond. He sets the bag and paper on the bed. Climbs in with her.

LACEY

Joe, don't. You're gonna wake her. I'm not in the mood. I've been pumping.

JOE

Again? Dairy cows are hooked up to less plumbing. But aren't nearly as sexy...

He smiles. Wraps an arm around Lacey and Eva. No response.

A moment. He strokes Lacey's arm. Kisses her shoulder. Inches his face toward hers. She turns away.

LACEY

My dad wants to come up next weekend.

Joe's eyes drift open. He sighs.

JOE

Okay. Just him?

LACEY

No, Mom too. And not okay. The thought makes me want to kill myself.

JOE

Honey. Please don't talk that way.

LACEY

Stop pretending you like them.

JOE

Not about your parents. And I do like them. I meant about killing yourself.

LACEY

Who says I'm joking.

JOE

Lacey, please...

He strokes her arm again. Nuzzles her. She resists.

JOE (CONT'D)

I know she's only ten weeks old... And I know you're having a rough time...

LACEY

I'm fine.

JOE

I know. And I'm... Sorry if I've been an asshole. It's just... Been so long, it feels like years...

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

It's making me a little crazy... I just want to... Feel myself inside of you again...

LACEY

Joe --

JOE

No no, we don't have to do anything. I'm trying to learn. Not to push. I just... Want to let you know I still... Want you. That I'm still warm for your form. And I'm here whenever you're ready.

She gives an expression that says: This is new.

LACEY

That's... Thank you. It can take months sometimes. I'll... Let you know.

He kisses her neck lightly. Then rolls onto his back. Grabs the paper. Scans the front page. After a moment:

JOE

Jeez. There's some crazy shit out there.

LACEY

What is it.

JOE

Trust me, you don't want to know. Just a new lead on a... Forget it. It's awful.

He keeps reading. She rolls over to glance at the paper. He was right: Awful. She's horror-struck. After a moment:

LACEY

Joey, baby, please don't read that sort of thing. At least not in bed. No, on second thought, don't read it at all.

She grabs the paper. Crumples it up. Tosses it aside. Slides up next to him. Wraps her arms around him.

LACEY (CONT'D)

I don't want that kind of energy around her. We have to protect her from it.

She nuzzles him. He forgets the paper. After a moment:

JOE

Does this mean you want to...

LACEY

No Joey, just, just hold me. That okay?

It is. He does. He closes his eyes, content for the moment. Hers stay open. They dart around, anxious, unsettled.

EXT. SIDEWALK - SUNSET

We pick up Devon's side six days after we last saw her making a phone call after Ben's proposal

DEVON: SIX DAYS LATER

Sunday, April 8, 2007

Under overcast skies, Devon ambles along, head down, hands in pockets, belly preceding her. Her wounds are still visible.

With her is ANDREA, slender, mid-thirties, long dark hair, coltishly attractive. She's in a blouse, tight jeans, white heels. They walk for a while. Devon's manner is venomous.

DEVON

Still stripping?

ANDREA

I'm still dancing, yes.

DEVON

Aren't you a little old?

ANDREA

Old compared to some, young compared to others. I'm practically prepubescent compared to a couple of the dancers. But there are men who like that...

A moment.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

And I'm an owner now. With partners. I'm trying to think about the future...

DEVON

What a rare distinction, part owner of central Missouri's hottest exotic night club, the Wrinkled Titty.

A moment. Andrea decides to brush it off.

ANDREA

So, um... How've you been?

No response.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

Jacob thought you'd be... Like this.
(Off of Devon's look)
My partner.

DEVON

You got remarried?

ANDREA

No, I didn't want to do that again... He's wonderful, you'd like him. Another musician. I'm cursed that way, I guess. We just celebrated our fifth anniversary.

DEVON

Of what, fucking? How special for you.

A moment.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Then why'd you see me. If Jakey said no.

ANDREA

I... Thought it might be nice. I thought you might need help.

DEVON

Bullshit. You never did a thing for unselfish reasons in your whole life. You saw me so you could feel all good about yourself, so you could pretend.

ANDREA

Why did you call, there's the question. Run out of other people to abuse?

DEVON

Fuck you, mommy.

A moment. A storm brews inside Devon.

ANDREA

Okay, I've had enough of this. I hope you find a way to enjoy your miserable --

DEVON

'Cause I want to know. What's wrong with me. To find out why I'm so fucked up.

ANDREA

How the hell am I supposed to know? It's not my doing.

DEVON

Yes it is. I'm a fucking mess because of you. I don't have a dad because of you. 'Cause you, I dunno, made him so sick of us he hauled ass and never looked back.

ANDREA

You were *nine*, what do you know about it?

DEVON

Loser after fucking loser, my whole life. Including the one I can't feel half my face because of. Why? 'Cause losers were all Mommy Dearest ever brought home. After you ran the only good one off.

ANDREA

Wah wah wah. You wanna fuck up your kid? Keep blaming all your troubles on me. So your kid can learn to do the same to you.

A moment.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

The "good" one? Yeah, he fooled me too. Till I saw the truth. Scariest day of my life. And the truth, if you give a shit, is that it was *me* that kicked *him* to the curb, it was *me* that never looked back.

DEVON

Why.

No response.

DEVON (CONT'D)

You expect me to believe a dried up, bitter old --

ANDREA

Because he beat me. 'Cause I got tired of hiding it, of piling make-up on my bruises day after fucking day. 'Cause he finally started raising his hand to you.

DEVON

You're lying.

A moment.

ANDREA

You get off on the smell of your own shit, Devon, you know that? Since you were about a day old. I wanted to see you so I could... Make up for... I don't know. Something. But I'm a fucking fool.

DEVON

You're a fucking whore.

ANDREA

No, I'm a stripper. And you know what? I don't need to make up for anything. I raised you right, I taught you well, I protected you. Whether you believe it or not. I don't know why you're so angry at the world. But it's not because of me.

She walks away. Then stops. Paws through her bag. Withdraws a card. Walks back. Extends it to Devon.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

I ought to have my head examined, but... When you're ready to stop carrying around this... Bile... If you're ever ready... The offer to help will still be good.

She walks away. Devon lingers in the gathering storm.

INT. JOE & LACEY'S HOME - DAY

We pick up Lacey's side eight weeks before we last saw her in the bedroom cuddling with Joe

LACEY: EIGHT WEEKS EARLIER

Wednesday, May 9, 2007

The guest bedroom. Lacey is in her nightgown, frantically throwing injection paraphernalia -- tourniquets, needles, bottles -- into a drawer. She's a total mess: Unshowered, big dark circles under her eyes, dull skin, foul expression.

Eva is 8 days old. Tiny even for her age. She's in a bassinet on the unmade guest bed. Awake, but oddly quiet.

The front doorbell is ringing. Insistently. Repeatedly.

JOE (O.S., MUFFLED)

Lacey?

She finishes. Runs to the partially-open, chained front door. Closes it. Unhooks the chain. Flings it open.

Joe is standing there. He looks exhausted. He's holding a dozen pink balloons and an enormous teddy bear. Next to him is a suitcase almost as big as the bear.

LACEY

You were supposed to call when you left the airport.

JOE

We were early. I wanted to surprise you.

A moment. Not the homecoming either had wanted. They kiss, an attempt to set things right. Then, brightly:

LACEY

Come on in. Welcome home.

JOE

Where's my girl? In the nursery?

LACEY

No no, in the, um... Stay here...

She heads back toward the guest bedroom.

JOE

Are you... Still sleeping in there?

She disappears for a moment. Then emerges, Eva in her arms. Lacey is very eager to present Eva to Joe. Anxious, even.

LACEY

This is your daughter.

(To Eva)

Say hi to Daddy, Eva. This is Daddy.

Daddy's tears have already started flowing.

JOE

My God. She's perfect. Can I hold her?

Lacey extends Eva to him. He takes her into his arms.

LACEY

I think she looks like you. Don't you?

JOE

Well... I couldn't see it from the photos you sent. But now I do. I think. You okay, honey?

She nods, makes an effort to smile. He's not convinced.

JOE (CONT'D)

(To Eva)

Hey there, pretty girl. I'm your daddy. I sure am. Luckiest daddy in the world.

Lacey's crying too by now. She tries to hide it.

JOE (CONT'D)

Lacey, what's wrong?

LACEY

It's nothing. Just, you know... Tired.

JOE

Come on, talk to me. What's going on?

LACEY

Nothing, I'm... Great. Happy! That you're finally coming back home.

A moment. Joe doesn't quite understand.

JOE

I'm happy to be home, too. We've got two whole weeks. You won't have to lift a finger. I'll take care of everything.

A long moment. Now it's Lacey who doesn't understand.

LACEY

Two weeks. You're not... Home to stay?

JOE

Well... No, honey. You knew that.

LACEY

Oh... I guess I did, but... I thought you'd want to come home. That we'd --

JOE

I do, of course I do, but it's not --

LACEY

-- start making plans. Can't we?

A moment. Joe is dumbfounded. Lacey strains to stay calm, to keep her tone sweet.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Joey. What I've gone through. Alone.
While you've been living the high life.

(Referring to Eva)

I need to feed her. Can you...

He hands Eva to her. She sits on the sofa. Makes a show of putting Eva on her breast. But Eva will not take her nipple.

JOE

The high life? It's... It's no pleasure
cruise, honey. I'm there for us.

She gives him a look that says: Yeah right.

JOE (CONT'D)

Okay. Fine. I'm there for you.

LACEY

Me? Joey... You were dying to go, tell
the truth. Don't put that on me.

Moved by the sight of mother nursing child, Joe softens. But Eva still rejects her nipple. And Lacey's frustration grows.

JOE

Honey, what are you doing? I've been
flying for a full day, three airplanes.
Why are you trying to start a fight?

LACEY

Right, I'm to blame.

A breast pump sits on a side table. Lacey straps it to her breast, turns it on. It hums rhythmically. She holds Eva coarsely in one arm, like a football.

JOE

Okay. You want to do this? Fine. Yes,
I was excited about the Middle East gig,
who wouldn't be? But then you drew your
little line in the sand...

Lacey gives him a look that says: What line?

JOE (CONT'D)

That you wouldn't come with me. So I set
my sights on the Chicago project instead,
you knew that. You pushed Dubai on me.

LACEY

It was the right career move for you, you
thought so too. But this pregnancy...
There's no way I could've gone with you.

Lacey's anger has made her animated, causing her to jostle tiny Eva roughly every few moments. But Eva is inactive even for a newborn, and remains quiet.

JOE

And then when I do make it home? For a supposedly romantic long weekend? You sleep in the guest room, you hardly let me even look at you.

LACEY

I was puking my guts out, Joe. *Many* times a day. You saw, did you think I was faking that? And I was worried about the baby, I have heard of mishaps in bed causing miscarriages, Joe --

JOE

You're still sleeping there. Will we share a bed *this* time? And it started way before you got pregnant, Lacey, the pushing me away. Way before.

LACEY

Crap. If anything you've been the distant one. I couldn't conceive and that was *it* for damaged goods like me.

JOE

You hardly let me. Except for a few very clinical baby-making... *Appointments*. About as sexy as a rectal exam.

Joe disengages for a moment, shakes his head. Lacey dries her eyes. Eva utters not a peep.

JOE (CONT'D)

Why are we doing this? I just got home, I haven't seen you for six weeks. I'm seeing our daughter for the first time...

LACEY

And you're going to get right back on a plane in two week and leave me again.

Lacey senses Joe detaching. She softens her tone.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Maybe you could get on the Chicago project now. It'd be much better than --

JOE

Enough. We have everything because of that job. I missed her birth, I missed everything because of it. Enough now.

Lacey absorbs the explosion. After a moment:

LACEY
I didn't choose the timing, Joe. I
wanted you to be there.

JOE
I... I'm sure you did. I'm not blaming
you, Lacey. It just makes me sad.

A moment.

JOE (CONT'D)
You know what? I'm gonna go back out.
Have some coffee, drive around a bit.
And when I come back, we're gonna do this
again, the right way. Okay?

LACEY
Okay.

He walks out.

A moment. She wipes her eyes dry. Does not look at Eva.

She lifts the pump to check how much milk she's produced.
The arm motion sends shooting pains through her rib cage.

LACEY (CONT'D)
Ahhh... Shit...

She gingerly touches her ribs. Exhales. Checks the amount
of milk again, more carefully this time. Frowns.

She walks to the window. Looks out. Locks the door.

She goes to the guest room. Lays Eva roughly on the bed.
Opens the drawer. Removes hypodermic needles, a small brown
bottle, a small box. Sits on the bed.

She checks the bottle: Empty. Grabs the box. Opens it.
Removes an identical brown bottle. Tosses the box aside.

As before, she wraps the tourniquet tightly above her elbow.
Draws fluid from the bottle into a needle. Injects it into a
vein. Inspects the injection site.

She rolls the paraphernalia back up. Walks into the closet,
leaving the discarded box lying next to the still-quiet Eva.
The box reads, in big black letters:

DOMPERIDONE
Hecho en Mexico

Under that box, overlooked by Lacey, is a bottle labeled:

SYRUP OF IPECAC

INT. DEVON'S APARTMENT - MORNING
*We pick up Devon's side four weeks after we last saw her
on the sidewalk with Andrea*

DEVON: FOUR WEEKS LATER
Tuesday, May 1, 2007

The place is filled with many boxes, and even more bags of trash. Warm sunlight spills in through the windows.

SARA

How is someone as pregnant as you going to move house? You are the house.

DEVON

I'm just doing the packing. Ben and Dave are coming by this afternoon to do the heavy lifting. Men are good for that.

SARA

I thought you weren't going to move.

DEVON

I wasn't. But my mom has a friend with a spare room, so...

SARA

Your mom?

Devon nods. Sara is very surprised.

SARA (CONT'D)

I thought she was out of the picture.

DEVON

She was. But I, um... I have some things to work out with her.

SARA

Anything you want to talk about?

Devon starts to tear up. She's reluctant to speak.

DEVON

I don't know... Something I blamed on her. That maybe actually I... Brought on. Wanted to happen. And...

She stops. It's too much to process.

SARA

Stop kicking yourself. Whatever it was, you were a kid. Still are. A good one. A smart one. Taught me a thing or two.

DEVON

Oh, yeah. Like what.

SARA

I hadn't been happy in that job for ages. Stayed with it for bad reasons. Healing other people's wounds instead of my own.

DEVON

No. I was out of line.

SARA

Your line was straight as an arrow. For once. Just... Don't be too hard on yourself. Okay? 'Cause that's my job.

Devon laughs in spite of herself.

SARA (CONT'D)

You gonna go back to the bar?

DEVON

No way. No. She's a... Dancer. My mom. I had this idea. That I could sew costumes for her... Company. I'm sure they could give me lots of work.

Sara nods. Devon wipes her eyes dry.

DEVON (CONT'D)

I don't know. I'll figure it out, though. I have to, don't I? So... I ought to get back to packing...

SARA

Sure, sure. Oh, I brought you something.

Sara reaches into a bag at her feet. Withdraws a beautifully patterned blanket. Hands it to Devon. Who is very touched.

SARA (CONT'D)

A traditional African blanket. See, those women invented the baby carrier. Although these days some baby named Bjorn is trying to steal all the credit. Typical Swede...

Sara drapes the blanket over Devon's shoulders.

SARA (CONT'D)

So you sling the baby around on your back and then tie it off in front. If you... If you keep the baby I'll come by and give you a proper lesson how to wear it. If not, just... Use it as a blanket.

DEVON

Thank you, Sara.

SARA

Any decisions?

Devon shakes her head.

DEVON

Too much chaos in my life right now to make a good choice. So I'm just gonna see how I feel. After I have it.

SARA

Well if you need any help, just let me know. Especially breast feeding. You may not know it but I have a reputation as a bona fide genius with the titty.

DEVON

I didn't know.

SARA

Oh yeah, I can get milk out of a garden gnome. Did you know that it's really all about suction? Suck on any nipple long enough, it'll make milk. Even a man's...

Devon grimaces. Sara lingers. She doesn't want to go.

SARA (CONT'D)

And then there's all kinds of things you can take, too, to help: Milk thistle, DepoProvera, domperidone, human growth hormone... I'm the one to talk to...

Devon nods.

SARA (CONT'D)

If you keep it, that is...

She turns to go. And turns back again.

SARA (CONT'D)

And no complications with that teratoma, right? You're good?

Devon nods.

SARA (CONT'D)

Okay, I'm going, I swear I'm going. I've got a class. Creative writing. I suck.

Devon laughs.

SARA (CONT'D)

Bye Devon.

DEVON

Bye.

They hesitate. Then share a hug. Sara walks out.

Devon returns to her packing. Several moments pass.

There is a knock at the door. As she opens it:

DEVON (CONT'D)

Go creatively write!

But it's not Sara. It's Lacey. She's very pregnant. She's in light street clothing, and wearing a name tag. Around her shoulders are the straps of a large backpack.

LACEY

Hi. I'm Lucy. I'm from the county's women's welfare program. Your clinic notified us that you'll be delivering soon, so this is just a courtesy call to drop off a few things you'll be needing.

She holds up a bag emblazoned with the clinic's logo.

LACEY (CONT'D)

There's a starter inventory of diapers -- won't last you long but still it's something -- and some lovely wipes and lotion that won't irritate baby's skin...

DEVON

Why didn't they just give it to me at the clinic?

LACEY

Well... This is so much more personal. We find that most new moms prefer it.

DEVON

Okay. Thanks.

Devon holds out her hand for the bag. Lacey stares at her.

LACEY

Is there... Anything you'd like to discuss? Perhaps you have a few questions that haven't been answered?

DEVON

No, I'm good, thanks.

LACEY

Okay...

Hesitantly, Lacey hands over the bag. Then delays:

LACEY

There's a refrigerator magnet in the bag with our information. Give us a ring if there's anything at all you need...

DEVON

Thanks.

Lacey doesn't leave. Devon shuts the door anyway.

A moment passes. There is another knock. Devon opens.

LACEY

I'm so sorry. Would you mind if I used your... Facilities?

No response. Lacey is out of sorts.

LACEY (CONT'D)
I wouldn't normally ask, but I'm not sure
I can make it all the way back to work.

Lacey refers uneasily to her very pregnant belly.

LACEY (CONT'D)
The baby pushes on your bladder. Of
course you know.

Devon's face is hard, suspicious. A long moment. Suddenly,
she softens. Shakes her head apologetically.

DEVON
Sure. Come on in.

Lacey enters.

DEVON (CONT'D)
First right. There's still some TP.

LACEY
Thank you.

Lacey enters the bathroom. Doesn't fully close the door.

Devon sighs anxiously. Grabs a couple of cheap glass vases.
Picks one up and starts to wrap it in newspaper.

A few moments pass.

Lacey suddenly appears behind her. Wraps an arm around her
torso. With her other hand puts a cloth to her mouth.

Instinctively, Devon knocks Lacey's hand away. Swings her
elbow back hard into Lacey's rib cage. Lacey yelps in pain.
Devon drops the vase to the floor.

Shocked and bewildered, Devon turns to Lacey. Lacey is lost,
panicking. She backhands Devon. Devon stumbles backward,
slides on a small pile of magazines, falls to the carpet.

Devon hurries to her feet. Tackles Lacey around the
midsection. Both women tumble to the floor.

Lacey swings a fist sideways into Devon's ear. Devon recoils
in pain. Lacey scrambles backward away from her.

Devon looks up. The vase is in Lacey's hand. Devon pleads:

DEVON
I don't have anything worth stealing.

Lacey swings it squarely against Devon's head.

Devon loses consciousness.

INT. DEVON'S APARTMENT - MORNING

*We pick up with Lacey and Devon just twenty minutes
after Devon lost consciousness*

LACEY AND DEVON: TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Tuesday, May 1, 2007

Lacey is sweating. Her face is red, her eyes determined, grim. She hunches over her open backpack. Paws through it. But her pregnant belly is getting in her way.

LACEY

Damn it.

She jerks up her blouse. Her belly is fake, made of latex. She tears it off violently. Tosses it aside.

Behind her, Devon is bound and gagged, lying on a drop cloth. She breathes into a triangular mask of clear plastic. A tube runs from the mask into a canister.

She slowly opens her eyes.

Lacey rummages through her pack. Withdraws bleach, soap, Formula 409, rags, cleaning gloves. Sets them aside.

She takes out a needle and a large scalpel. Turns to Devon. Sees that she's conscious. Gasps, steps back.

Devon tries to get up. But she's too weak, disoriented.

Lacey's expression melts into disbelief. Then painful regret. Tears roll down her cheeks. She stares at Devon.

She approaches Devon slowly, hesitantly. She stops a couple of feet away. Kneels down. And in a distraught whisper:

LACEY (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. I'm so, so sorry.

Her face draped in sadness, she watches Devon for a long moment. Devon moans. Tears stream from Lacey's eyes. She's unsure, on the verge of stopping, of changing her mind.

LACEY (CONT'D)

It's what's best for the baby. It's
what's best for the baby. It's what's
best for the baby.

Lacey loosens the valve on the canister. Apologetically:

LACEY (CONT'D)

I promise, I'll be as quick as possible.

Devon struggles. Cries softly. Then goes unconscious.

CUT TO:

Lacey is looking down, working feverishly, focusing intently. What she's working on is not visible.

Her face is red: She's been crying, but is no longer. Behind her, a portable vital signs monitor beeps regularly with Devon's pulse.

She closely examines her handiwork. Pauses anxiously. Picks up a scalpel. Takes two deep breaths. Then another.

She makes a rapid up-and-down incision. Puts the scalpel down. Then goes back to work, with just her hands this time.

Her eyes suddenly widen. A look of wonder takes over her face. Her anxiety melts into a joyful grin. Her breathing quickens. Fresh tears roll down her face.

She takes a bulb syringe. Squeezes it rapidly to clear it. Then reaches down. And with it, sucks up fluid.

She takes two metal clamps. Applies them. Then picks up a pair of scissors. And with some effort, severs a cord.

Her grin amplifies into a megawatt smile. With absolute focus and great care, she lifts the tiny girl up and out.

With a blanket, she wraps the child. With another, buffs her vigorously. Flicks the bottom of her feet.

Cries spring from the little girl. Lacey sets her down.

Suddenly, Lacey looks around rapidly, here and there. She's forgotten something. She panics for a moment.

Lacey improvises. Grabs a pillow from the sofa. Looks at Devon a final time. Smothers her with it. The monitor's beep becomes a steady tone as Devon's heart beats its last.

The newborn continues to wail. Her cries fade into...

INT. JOE & LACEY'S HOME - AFTERNOON

... The cries of Eva as a one-year-old.

It is one year later, back to the time and place where the very first scene ended: At Eva's birthday party.

Lacey sits with Eva at the lit cake. Lacey's eyes are still fixed on something at the back of the room. She wipes away a tear. Returns her focus to Eva and the candle.

LACEY

Ready, and...

As Lacey blows out the candle, a camera flash goes off.

CUT TO IMAGE CAPTURED BY CAMERA.
FADE IN TITLE OVER IMAGE:

EVA: ONE YEAR LATER
Sunday, April 27, 2008

FADE OUT TITLE AND IMAGE.

Cheers rise from the crowd. Music plays. Lacey's gaze returns to the same place at the back of the room.

What she's staring at is Devon. Bedraggled, disheveled.

LACEY (CONT'D)
(To Eva)
Your mommy loves you so much. Yes she does. So, so much.

Roy approaches her. He's holding a huge, gleaming knife.

ROY
(Whispering)
Just so you know, your mother spent days on this thing. Be sure to rave about it.
(Normal voice)
So let's have some cake already! Think you can cut it?

He grins, amused by his own pun. He extends the knife to Lacey. She hesitates. Looks down at the mother-and-child cake. He cajoles her:

ROY (CONT'D)
Come on, little missy, you're strong enough!

She looks down at Eva. And for a long moment, loses herself in the child. As she did in the first scene, when the two were dancing together in slow circles.

ROY (CONT'D)
What's wrong, honey?

Suddenly, she inhales very deeply. Looks around the room, alert, awake, alive. She returns her focus to Roy.

LACEY
I have something to take care of.

ROY
Oh. Okay.

She rises. Walks determinedly with Eva past where Devon was standing. Back down the hall to the nursery.

Lacey shuts the door. Sits. Rocks. Nuzzles Eva.

Lacey looks up. Devon is standing in front of the closed door. Lacey is not surprised to see her.

Devon does not utter a word. But her expression speaks volumes: Menacing, haunting, insistent. Wordlessly demanding the return of the child that is rightfully hers.

Lacey looks down at the sleeping child in her arms. Then stares straight at Devon. It is a stare that does not waver.

LACEY

I'm sorry. It was wrong. I know that.

Lacey looks up at Devon. Who has not moved from in front of the closed door.

LACEY (CONT'D)

You're dead. I can't ever make it right by you. But she's not. I can make it right by her. I'm not her mother, I never will be. But I can love her like I was. Maybe that'll be enough. For her.

Lacey takes a look around the stark room. Her eyes settle on Joe's mobile, hanging above the crib.

LACEY (CONT'D)

It'll have to be enough for me.

A long moment. Followed by the sound of the door slowly opening. Lacey does not move her eyes from the mobile. A tear makes its way down her cheek.

JOE

What do you know, it works in here.

She looks up. Joe looms in the doorway. Devon has vanished.

She shakes her head, as if to convince herself that he's real. She's overwhelmed by the sight of him, deeply moved to be near him. But has no idea what to do or say.

JOE (CONT'D)

I got the picture... You and Eva with the cupcake. I must have... Looked at it about a hundred times...

His tone grows serious.

JOE (CONT'D)

I've been doing a lot of thinking...

Lacey does not move. Does not even blink.

JOE (CONT'D)

I love you. I just... I don't want anything else. I just want to... Make it work. Love you. Love Eva. 'Cause you're right. Nothing else matters.

He approaches them. Wraps his arms around them.

Lacey nuzzles him. But her expression is empty. She stares into the distance, as though she were still all alone.

And then a smile breaks through.

She squeezes him tight.

FADE TO BLACK.