

The Nicest Man in Berkeley

Written by

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EXT. OUTSIDE OF A BERKELEY CALIFORNIA HIGHSCHOOL - AFTERNOON

School is letting out, and students, waiting for rides, are gathering in front of the school.

Fifteen-year-old Pearl Beckham, a beautiful, light-skinned African Brit with an English accent talks with other students of various races.

Randy Whitehead, Caucasian (26), pulls his mid-size Honda motorcycle up to the curb where Pearl is standing and removes his helmet.

Randy's a handsome blonde with nose and ear rings. Shirtless, he shows off his sixpack along with many tattoo's on his body.

As the girls can't help but glance at Randy, he revs the motorcycle a few times.

PEARL

(To the students she's
standing with)

Does he even care about how loud
his bike is?

MARGARET

At least it's not as loud as a
Harley, the "I don't care about
anyone but myself bike."

The girls take notice of his body.

CICELY

Yeah, a little noisy's okay. Look
at that tat just below his
shoulder: "Save the Children." Can
I say, "bomb!" He can toast my
bread any day.

PEARL

Anybody who saves children can't be
too bad, right?

Pearl catches Randy staring at her.

MARGARET

(To Pearl)

He is . . .

MARGARET (CONT'D)

. . . totally checkin' you out,
Pearl. Shit, he's got some
experience on him, too.

(MORE)

MARGARET (CONT'D)
Mid twenties, shit, and he wants
some of you, Pearl. Go on,
introduce your beautiful self!

PEARL
He was checking you guys out, too,
right?

CICELY
No. No means no. You means you.

Pearl reluctantly steps over to him.

Randy flashes a "cool" smile.

RANDY
I'm Randy.

PEARL
Pearl.

RANDY
Pearl, this may sound a little
forward, but you took seven steps
to get over here. So, could you
take just, oh, two more steps to
climb onto the back of my bike?

PEARL
Too soon for that.

RANDY
Too soon to take a short ride? Do
you think you're too beautiful to
ride on the back of my bike?

PEARL
I just wouldn't feel comfortable
holding on to your naked torso.

RANDY
It's not naked, got tats all over
it. Plus, with your hands so close
to my heart, you'll learn more
about me.

PEARL
You really help kids?

RANDY
Oh, yeah, I volunteer at NGOs, you
know. I love the little ones. Let
me give you a ride home. Come on.

PEARL
I live only five blocks away. I
always walk.

RANDY
Oh, no problem, I'll get off my
bike and walk you home.

Pearl looks around and sees her friends egging her on.

PEARL
Well, Randy, can you move up a
little on the seat?

RANDY
Sure, but after you get on, you'll
just slide back toward the front
and right up against me.

Pearl hops on the bike with Randy, who hands the helmet back
to her.

RANDY (CONT'D)
See, Pearl, I'm even willing to
sacrifice my skull for you.

Pearl laughs.

The other girls smile with some concern as Pearl wraps her
arms around Randy's naked torso.

Pearl is trying to not appear aroused but obviously is.

CECILY
Oh, my God, girl!

EXT. IN FRONT OF PEARL'S HOUSE, A FAIRLY WELL KEMPT TWO-STORY
VICTORIAN - ABOUT TEN MINUTES LATER

Pearl stands next to Randy, who still straddles his
motorcycle.

In the background, Shirley Dandridge (89), at the house next
door, steps out onto the front porch.

A suspicious Shirley clutches her hips as she observes Pearl
and Randy.

Pearl doesn't notice Shirley, but Randy does.

RANDY
Who's the nosey old bitty?

Pearl turns around and sees Shirley staring right at her.

PEARL

Pretty much my best friend. I take it, Randy, you don't volunteer at nursing homes?

RANDY

I don't think Shirley wants me to take care of her.

PEARL

Shirley and I look after each other.

RANDY

Well, it doesn't look like she's gonna look away anytime soon. So, I'll check out for now.

PEARL

Oh, I can introduce you.

RANDY

If the old gal wasn't laser-staring, I'd give you a kiss on the cheek. Instead, I'll just text you later.

Randy then quickly takes off.

EXT. THE SAME TWO-STORY VICTORIAN HOUSE - NEXT DAY - EARLY MORNING

A light-skinned African Brit, Douglas Beckham (36), tired and too skinny with a shaven head, is out on the second story balcony slowly wiping the railing.

Shirley Dandridge passes by and looks up.

Douglas waves. Like his daughter, Pearl, Douglas has an English accent.

DOUGLAS

Lovely morning, yes, Shirley?

SHIRLEY

With your Queen's English, my name actually sounds beautiful.

DOUGLAS

Well then, I'm happy to say my accent is at your disposal.

SHIRLY
Parents coming home today?

DOUGLAS
Well, they told you the date,
right? June 7th?

SHIRLY
They asked me to let them know if
any vagrants had moved in.

Shirly giggles.

DOUGLAS
The answer is "yes."

Shirly gazes up and just admires Douglas for a moment.

SHIRLY
My, you're so handsome, Douglas.

DOUGLAS
If that's true, I don't know how it
happened.

SHIRLY
It's because you're parents are
beautiful. By the way, did you
happen to notice the hoodlum who
gave Pearl a ride home from school
yesterday?

DOUGLAS
Saw him from up here. Handsome lad.

SHIRLY
All of those tattoos are just
terrible.

DOUGLAS
Fashion will be fashion.

SHIRLY
Shouldn't you have a sit-down with
Pearl?

DOUGLAS
If the young lad becomes important
in her life, I'm sure she'll bring
it up to me.

SHIRLY

Eyes peeled, my dear. To me, the caution lights are going off around him like a Christmas tree.

DOUGLAS

Yes, Shirley.

SHIRLY

Thank you for saying my name, again.

Douglas winks at Shirley.

Shirly starts to leave but stops suddenly.

SHIRLY (CONT'D)

By the way, Douglas, how's the Epstein Bar?

Douglas looks around as if to make sure nobody's around.

DOUGLAS

Please don't tell Pearl, okay?

SHIRLY

Don't worry, dear. It will remain Epstein Bar until you say different. Even during my memory lapses, I don't think much about it.

DOUGLAS

You've definitely got your "thinking cap" on today. Anyway, in answer to your caring inquiry, I'm not doing so well at the moment. I've got another course next week. They just wipe me out.

SHIRLY

Keep it up, dear. Keep it up. I have a good feeling about this.

Douglas smiles and blows Shirley a kiss.

DOUGLAS

We love you, Shirley.

SHIRLY

My boy, Arnie, would've been your best buddy, I'm sure.

DOUGLAS
Of course, that is, if he was
anything like you.

SHIRLY
Like me? Oh, dear, he was me, and I
was him.

EXT. AN UBER, A MINI VAN, ON THE OAKLAND BAY BRIDGE -
CONTINUOUS

INT. INSIDE THE UBER

African American Frank Montana (69) and Caucasian Kerry
Montana (68) are chatting in the back seat.

Suit cases are stacked in back of them.

KERRY
Have you started on your sabbatical
report?

FRANK
Not really. What are they gonna do?
Fire me? Plus, it's my last
sabbatical.

KERRY
You are expecting emeritus status,
right?

FRANK
Well . . .

KERRY
. . . well, you still have to
behave. Somewhat.

FRANK
Nobody in Physical Anthro has
published as much as I have, dear.

KERRY
That takes you only so far in this
world.

FRANK
Can we just be happy about being
back.

KERRY

I'm never happy about being back to America.

FRANK

People are a lot nicer in Malaysia
. . .

KERRY

. . . More authentic.

FRANK

Aww, we'll go back soon. I have more to do there.

KERRY

Well, no call from Shirley in a while. Hope there aren't squatters in our house.

FRANK

The vagrant problem in Berkeley is on the mend.

KERRY

The timed lights turning off and on in the bedroom and foyer help, I'm sure.

FRANK

I wonder if Shirley's late son, Arnie, is still playing with our make believe grand daughter.

KERRY

Oh, you know Shirley's fantasies. She means well. She dropped that particular fantasy a few months ago.

FRANK

Yeah, she probably got better meds. Dementia can come and go at the early stages.

KERRY

Shirly must be using our place a lot, though. I've been checking out our BillPay online, and we've been paying nearly as much as we do when we're home.

Kerry looks out the van window with a look of deep concern, periodically glancing at Frank.

INT. IN THE MONTANA HOUSE KITCHEN - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Douglas, winded and weak, is at the stove cooking eggs and bacon.

Pearl is sitting at the table.

PEARL

Daddy, you know I can sweep the balcony. Just wake me up. I thought we discussed that.

DOUGLAS

I'd been up for awhile. I was bored. You still want your fried eggs a little soupy?

PEARL

Not as soupy as last time.

Douglas hesitates, weakening even more, leans over and palms the kitchen counter with both hands.

PEARL (CONT'D)

Slowly in through your nose, daddy, slowly out through your mouth. okay?

Douglas closes his eyes and does the breathing exercise.

Pearl looks on with concern.

PEARL (CONT'D)

Just don't sweep if you're not up to it.

DOUGLAS

Give me a break, will ya?

PEARL

Take a break, and I'll cook.

Pearl hurries over and takes Douglas's hand and leads him to a kitchen table chair.

Douglas sits and continues his breathing exercise while Pearl takes over breakfast duties.

PEARL (CONT'D)
Egg yokes like snot, daddy?

Douglas chuckles.

DOUGLAS
That's my girl. Yeah, snot yokes.

PEARL
Daddy, I'm curious about something.

DOUGLAS
That's a start.

PEARL
Shut up. No, really, it's about science class.

DOUGLAS
Science is mostly good.

PEARL
I dissected a frog yesterday.

DOUGLAS
We didn't do that at my school. We dissected a human being.

PEARL
(Turning quickly toward him)
Oh, daddy, bull shit.

Douglas laughs.

DOUGLAS
Well, what about dissecting this frog?

PEARL
Well, the other students, most of them, were grossed out by the process.

DOUGLAS
Don't tell me; you liked it?

PEARL
I wasn't grossed out at all. I was interested in the process. It was fascinating.

DOUGLAS
You just found your calling, my
dear.

Pearl hurries over to Douglas with her hand up for a "high five."

Douglas and Pearl each shout out a word at the same time.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
Serial killer!

PEARL
Surgeon!

Pearl is humorously stunned.

PEARL (CONT'D)
You wanker!

They laugh.

DOUGLAS
Little young to be uttering a word
like "wanker" to your father. Be
that as it may, dear, I agree with
you becoming a healer. But, I tell
you: you're gonna have to keep
those "A's" because there's no way
I'll ever be able to pay for Med
School. You'll need a scholarship
and some student loans.

PEARL
You don't have to worry about that.
I'll take care of it.

Douglas is suddenly filled with pride and a little sadness.

DOUGLAS
You know, my dear, I think you just
might do that.

PEARL
There's no JUST thinking in THIS
girl. Just doing. Just doing.

DOUGLAS
Where did you learn this attitude?

PEARL
From you, daddy, from when you were
strong.

DOUGLAS

I forgot about those days.

PEARL

Taught English, coached soccer.

DOUGLAS

Please, we're English. Call it football in my presence.

PEARL

Hell, you worked yourself to the bone for your students. Mom was so proud of you, daddy. And when you got Epstein Bar, your school just threw you out.

At the mention of "mom," they both go quiet for a moment.

DOUGLAS

I'm glad your mother didn't live to see me this way . . . I could barely stay standing in the classroom. Coaching was definitely out. I kept falling down on the athletic field.

PEARL

And coaches can't just sit all the time.

DOUGLAS

I'd have to get up too often. It simply would not have worked. Anyway, disability deposits simply aren't enough. I've got to think of something.

PEARL

I can get a job.

DOUGLAS

Not a chance. The money Shirley pays you for helping her should be enough.

PEARL

I hate taking her money. Just being with her is payment enough.

DOUGLAS

You know it doesn't present a burden for Shirley. She's quite well to do.

Pearl hesitates.

PEARL

You know, daddy, part of the reason I brought up mom was because I need to talk about her sometimes.

DOUGLAS

Oh, yes, of course, but we've done that. Have we not? It's been two years. We loved her. She loved us. Now it's just us.

PEARL

She was my mom and your wife. If you would talk about her more, share your feelings, you might purge some of that Epstein Bar, which you didn't even have until after she passed.

Douglas pauses.

DOUGLAS

Who's the guy with the tats?

Pearl acts as though she's been found out, then slaps the eggs onto Douglas's plate and then clanks the plate on the table in front of him.

PEARL

Daddy, talking things out empties our bodies of fear. It's slow but it does work. And about that boy, we both know that I might not ever have the time for a boy, but I can sure as hell look at them and talk with them.

DOUGLAS

Oh, honey, I'm . . .

Pearl hurries to a staircase leading up to the second floor and hard-steps her way up.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

(Raising his voice)

I'm sorry, Pearl! I'm . . .

EXT. KERRY'S AND FRANK'S UBER IS CRUISING BY THE UC BERKELEY CAMPUS - CONTINUOUS

INT. INSIDE THE CAR - CONTINUOUS

Kerry looks to the right with surprise.

KERRY

Oh, my God, honey, to the right over there, they tore down our favorite Indian restaurant while we were gone.

Frank takes a look.

FRANK

Looks like they took down the whole food plaza. Before we left, I'd heard some big developer was gonna buy that property and build high-end housing for all the incoming foreign students.

KERRY

Well, they're gonna lose money because the number of incoming foreign students is down by at least fifty percent.

FRANK

Yeah, Covid 19 took care of that, right?

KERRY

That and strained relations with China.

FRANK

Only a few of my Chinese students even like it here. They hate the food. They say America's boring.

KERRY

Well, I agree with them. If Berkeley, of all places, is boring, then we're in trouble.

FRANK

They're definitely not wrong. And, by the way, Berkeley's always been in trouble.

They both chuckle.

KERRY

Almost home.

Kerry gazes out, again, with an expression of deep concern.

INT. INSIDE THE MONTANA HOUSE AT PEARL'S CLOSED BEDROOM DOOR -
CONTINUOUS

Douglas is winded from walking up the stairs to Pearl's bedroom.

DOUGLAS
Pearl? Come on. Open the door.

PEARL (O.S.)
Eat your snot breakfast.

Douglas seriously struggles to breath and stubbles to his knees.

Pearl opens the door and is quite concerned.

PEARL (CONT'D)
Daddy, I think you're getting worse. You've never struggled this much with your breathing. Look, I have my driver's permit now, so I'll drive you to the doctor.

DOUGLAS
You forgot. We don't have a car, my dear. You know I always take the bus.

PEARL
Shirly said I could use her car.

DOUGLAS
That old Volvo doesn't even start.

Douglas starts getting his wind back and reaches out to Pearl for a hand to get up.

Pearl takes his hand and helps him rise to his feet.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
You know I'll never take you with me to the doctor. It's too negative.

PEARL
I'm fifteen, daddy. Don't be ridiculous.

Suddenly, we hear commotion coming from downstairs. Douglas and Pearl are a bit alarmed.

DOUGLAS
More than one, so it's not Shirley.
Home invaders in the morning?

PEARL
I hear addicts never know what time
it is. Anyway, it's probably
Shirley.

DOUGLAS
Two Shirlys? She always says, "It's
Shirly!" Should we all the police?

PEARL
I left my phone downstairs.

DOUGLAS
Me, too. Fuck.

Now they hear muffled conversation, unintelligible.
Then the voices clear up.

FRANK (O.S.)
(Loudly)
Hello? Hello?

Douglas and Pearl are startled by Frank's voice.

KERRY (O.S.)
Shirly, is that you? Is this your
breakfast on the table?

DOUGLAS
(Calls down the stairs)
Kerry Montana? Kerry Montana?

Kerry and Frank wince.

KERRY (O.S.)
For Christ sakes, yes!

INT. KITCHEN NEAR THE STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Frank and Kerry are frightened.

Frank calls up the stairs.

FRANK
Okay. Okay. Now, I'm serious here.
Do we have to call the police?

There's silence for a moment.

PEARL (O.S.)
I guess that's okay. If you really
want to.

DOUGLAS (O.S.)
I guess it's okay, but it would
greatly complicate things.

KERRY
Frank, it's not Shirley.

FRANK
No shit.

KERRY
Doesn't sound like a vagrant
either.

DOUGLAS (O.S.)
We certainly mean you no harm.

PEARL (O.S.)
My daddy couldn't harm you even if
he wanted to. He's too weak.

Frank and Kerry are extremely perplexed.

FRANK
Well, now, then why don't you come
down here and finish your breakfast
so we can talk this through. How's
that?

PEARL (O.S.)
Oh, I think we can do that.

DOUGLAS (O.S.)
Well, now that I'm faced with this
situation, I might need a little
time?

PEARL (O.S.)
Jesus, daddy!

DOUGLAS (O.S.)
I'm not well. I do apologize.

KERRY
So, do we have to wait until you
get better?

FRANK

Either you come down here, or we go
up there. It's your choice.

There's silence. Then we hear footsteps slowly descending the stairs.

Frank and Kerry back away from the stairs.

Douglas and Pearl, holding hands, appear at the base of the stairs.

Frank's and Kerry's expressions change slightly to relief.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Are there more of you?

PEARL

No, sir, just us.

FRANK

I'm Frank. This is Kerry, my wife.

PEARL

I'm Pearl. This is my father,
Douglas.

FRANK

(Addressing Pearl)

Did Shirley let you in?

PEARL

Yes, she did.

FRANK

Why would she do that?

Douglas and Kerry start to stare at each other.

Douglas takes on a look of longing while Kerry takes on a look of amazement mixed with dread.

Suddenly, Kerry buries her face in her hands, turns and leaves the kitchen to another part of the house.

Frank calls after her.

FRANK (CONT'D)

What's going on here? (raising his
voice) Kerry, are you okay?

DOUGLAS

Frank, maybe you should go talk to
her. We're not going anywhere.

PEARL

Yeah, we'll be right here. I mean,
we might sit down or something. You
know?

Frank turns to find Kerry.

INT. THE HOUSE STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Kerry, her eyes flooded with tears, is looking out the
window.

Frank is standing behind her.

FRANK

I'm a smart person, Kerry. I can
usually figure shit out quickly.
But this one's got me . . .

KERRY

. . . Please, you ask Douglas why
he's here. I can't. Please? Please?

FRANK

Oh, my God, Kerry. Is my life about
to get shit-sprayed.

KERRY

No, not shit. But your life is
about to change.

FRANK

Oh, fuck, I'm beginning to connect
the dots. Oh, fuck!

KERRY

Please ask Douglas.

FRANK

Oh, my God, are you having an
affair with that man, and is that
your daughter? Well, I guess that
wouldn't work.

KERRY

Nothing like that. Just ask him.

Just then they hear Douglas's and Pearl's voices from the
study door.

DOUGLAS

I'm your son. I'm your son.

PEARL
I'm your granddaughter.

DOUGLAS
And Pearl is your granddaughter.

PEARL
I said that, daddy.

DOUGLAS
I said it, again, to kinda bring it home?

PEARL
Okay.

While Kerry keeps looking out the window, Frank, breathing fast, turns around and puts a finger on his pulse.

PEARL (CONT'D)
Hey, this is not a big deal, grandpa. It's just nature doing its thing.

DOUGLAS
Pearl, that would be "having done its thing."

PEARL
I just don't want grandpa to die before we can give him some love.

Kerry, still at the window, begins to sob.

FRANK
Kerry, if you don't stop crying, I'm gonna shit my pants.

Pearl hurries over to Kerry and puts an arm around her shoulders.

Kerry cringes briefly then calms down as she turns around and gives her granddaughter a hug.

Douglas approaches Frank.

DOUGLAS
I think you're okay now, dad. Take your finger off your pulse.

Frank does what Douglas says.

FRANK
Goddamn, you look like a young me.
It's so weird. How? How?

INT. KITCHEN - ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

Frank, Kerry, and Douglas are sitting around the kitchen table while Pearl serves coffee and Danishes.

Frank and Kerry are still in shock but have calmed down quite a bit.

FRANK
Was I in a coma for multiple years?
How did I miss this? I'm too old to
take in something this big.

PEARL
Yeah, it's pretty amazing.

KERRY
Well, I'm caught red handed here.
I'll just lay it out. It was the
sabbatical I took thirty six years
ago, Frank. England, remember?

FRANK
Yes, of course I remember.

KERRY
I couldn't tell you that we were
pregnant. And, well, you know I was
a "good" catholic back then and
couldn't get an abortion.

PEARL
Thanks for that, grandma.

DOUGLAS
Thanks, mum.

KERRY
Oh, my! Of course.

FRANK
What the Hell? You couldn't tell
me? And then what?

KERRY
I left Berkeley before I started
showing.

(MORE)

KERRY (CONT'D)

I did the last six months of term in London, spent a week with the boy, who I couldn't bring myself to even name--so I just called him "Boy"--and then adopted him out. You know, our careers were just getting good and I didn't want to slow that down.

DOUGLAS

I believe I've somewhat misinterpreted all of this. So, it's not like you were a single mother and couldn't give me a good life? Or something like that?

KERRY

I cried for days. I really did. Douglas, we were just seven years at UC Berkeley; it would be my first sabbatical, and, frankly, we were riding high, good salaries, grant money coming in for research. We were at the top of our games.

PEARL

Damn!

FRANK

I would've rather raised my son, Kerry. Look, I always knew you were edgy, but I never realized you were this selfish. My God, woman!

KERRY

Well, Douglas and Pearl are here now. Regrets won't help.

FRANK

That's not good enough, Kerry. I'm talking catastrophic loss here. This. This. This is too much for me. I've never faced a situation like this before. What can I do? I want to punish you, Kerry. I'm not even a Christian, but I have to say, this is biblical as to the size of your sin. If there ever was a sin, this is it.

DOUGLAS

Not the biggest sin. It's not like she committed infanticide. Thanks for that, mum.

KERRY

No, I didn't consider infanticide,
of course. Goddamn!

PEARL

Wow, this is getting raw.

Frank can't stop shaking his head.

FRANK

How can I ever recover from this?
How could I have not known?

KERRY

Because you were completely
absorbed in your work, my dear.
Probably, if I'd told you I was
pregnant, it would've taken you
days to hear it.

FRANK

A person who would say that has no
idea who I am. I would've loved a
child, would have sacrificed for a
child. Apparently, you weren't
willing to do that. My God, you
gave me absolutely no say in it.
It's fiendish.

DOUGLAS

Can I interrupt for a minute,
please?

FRANK

Kerry, you have beheaded my trust
in you.

KERRY

Bull shit. You never trusted me.
You've always suspected me of
having affairs.

FRANK

Oh, fuck, have you? Steve, for
example?

KERRY

Always has to be a man!

FRANK

Oh, fuck, are you gay, too. I mean,
I have nothing against
homosexuality, but I . . .

PEARL

Grandma, you're great at deflecting harsh realities. You're turning Grandpa into the perpetrator. What's that about?

Everyone pauses.

KERRY

Pearl, my dear, I should be calling you a nosey bitch, but I'm very impressed with that observation. Well, you happen to be correct. I've always been good at twisting the truth. That's why I'm such an accomplished scholar.

FRANK

Kerry, you just deflected, again.

Kerry stands up, looks around.

KERRY

Okay. Okay. I'll just pack my things and I'll be out of here.

FRANK

Shit, we haven't even unpacked, yet.

Frank points toward the front door, where the suitcases are.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Your bag is right there. Take it and go.

Kerry is wavering.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Well, what the Hell are you waiting for, you vile piece of shit.

PEARL

Keep your cool, grandpa.

DOUGLAS

This is getting seriously painful.

PEARL

I mean, we knew you guys would probably flip out with all this, but, damn, you really are flipping out. I mean, you can't solve problems when you're angry.

KERRY

My suitcase is filled with dirty clothes. If I could at least wash a load before I go, I'd really appreciate it.

FRANK

You got money. You're riding high, remember? There's a damn laundry mat down the road. Berkeley's filled with them. You just might have to mingle with students, some of whom might be some of our other long lost children.

Kerry is exasperated.

Douglas puts his hands up in the air.

DOUGLAS

Time out. Time out. Mom, you stand over by the kitchen door. Dad, you stand by the hallway door. Hear me? Five minutes. Take five.

Frank stands and walks over the hallway door, and Kerry walks over to the kitchen door.

PEARL

Daddy taught high school for many years. He used "timeout" all the time to keep students from stabbing each other.

KERRY

Oh, my, high school? I'm surprised you didn't go into university teaching.

DOUGLAS

I had to work full-time to get through undergrad and the teaching certificate. Not to mention the student loans . . .

PEARL

. . . which still aren't paid off.

FRANK

Douglas, you and Pearl are the ultimate camouflage for this untrustworthy animal.

Frank throws his hands up.

FRANK (CONT'D)
So be it! So be it! Wash your
damned clothes!

KERRY
Do you mind if I wash them later.
I'm so jet lagged and we have our
son and granddaughter.

DOUGLAS
By the way, I re-attached the
washer drum. It was . . .

FRANK
. . . banging around in there. How
did you fix it?

PEARL
Daddy's handy. He's fixed all kinds
of stuff in the house. Shirley's
house, too. We even painted a few
rooms.

FRANK
We're so caught up in our work,
well, we just let domestic things
slide.

Pearl chuckles.

PEARL
Yeah, like everything was at least
partially broken when we moved in.

DOUGLAS
I had to install a new fuse box and
did some rewiring as well. You were
on the verge of a fire. I was
planning on re-wiring the whole
house.

FRANK
Douglas, can you re-wire your
mother?

PEARL
Daddy can fix anything except for
himself. Daddy's got Epstein Bar.

FRANK
(To Douglas)
By the way, what did you tell
Shirley?

DOUGLAS

Shirly's a sweet old lady, but I can't believe you'd ask somebody with early onset dementia to watch your house. I told her we're family. While replacing insulation in her attic, I found her cat, which had gone missing. Poor thing was dead.

FRANK

Oh, marigold?

DOUGLAS

Yes, that's the one.

KERRY

She was a great cat.

PEARL

Daddy got her a new cat. But, you know, we have to feed her and change the cat box. It's okay. I'm at Shirly's just about everyday. I love her. We just told Shirly who we were and asked her to not tell you guys because we wanted to surprise you.

FRANK

Surprise? Right now, my heart's trying to rip through my chest bones! How about the other neighbors?

KERRY

Frank, remember? We don't know our other neighbors.

FRANK

My God, my wife just told the truth.

KERRY

We're two older professionals who are almost one hundred percent socially apathetic.

FRANK

We have friends at work.

KERRY

And don't forget the foes.

FRANK

Those, too, yeah. Kerry, you're breaking records. Enough of the truth, okay?

KERRY

You're never gonna let me alone, are you?

FRANK

Never.

PEARL

Never say never.

DOUGLAS

Maybe he doesn't really mean, "never." By the way, I couldn't come up with the eleven hundred dollars for materials to finish re-wiring the house. And I've been too weak lately, I'm afraid.

FRANK

Where did you learn all this?

PEARL

Before he was a teacher, daddy worked in every phase of construction.

DOUGLAS

When I was a student. Also, teaching salaries are so low, I'd often pick up jobs for extra money-- you know, decks, additions, foundations, electric and plumbing, roofing, painting.

FRANK

Eleven hundred is not a lot of money for those materials. I mean, I did get a bid on re-wiring this place about two years ago. Nearly twenty thousand, I believe.

DOUGLAS

And about ninety percent of that is labor. With me, you don't pay labor, just materials. I do have a general contractor's license, so I get substantial discounts from suppliers.

KERRY

Douglas and Pearl, why are you two here? Why now?

There's a long pause.

Douglas acts as though he didn't expect that question.

DOUGLAS

People are so concerned with timing. Well, I want to be close to my mum and dad, I suppose, and I want Pearl to be close as well. I was hoping you'd be glad.

KERRY

I'm not un-glad. I'm actually feeling happy.

PEARL

You mean you feel comfortable with us?

FRANK

You feel like family. Genes? Pearl, where's your mother?

DOUGLAS

Kirstin was a teacher, too.

PEARL

She passed just over two years ago.

FRANK

Sorry to hear it, guys.

KERRY

Pearl, I'm so sorry. I'm sure she's on your mind a lot. Two years is nothing.

DOUGLAS

She is on our minds too much.

PEARL

Daddy doesn't like talking about her.

FRANK

Pearl, maybe that's just Douglas's way of handling the grief.

PEARL

Yeah, but he should handle my grief, too, at least a little.

KERRY

Honey, of course you want him to be a perfect daddy. But, know what, nobody comes with that diploma. Look, you're obviously smart as hell, you're our granddaughter, after all, and you're not a little one anymore, but there's still some dreamy little girl in you, right?

PEARL

You talk like you know me.

KERRY

DNA, sweetheart--it stands to reason you're going to be a lot like us. That's how we can know you without even knowing you.

FRANK

Kerry's a geneticist. An evil one.

Kerry palms her face.

FRANK (CONT'D)

(To Kerry)

I'm not gonna forget that easily.

DOUGLAS

It kind of feels like I grew up with you guys.

KERRY

Even though you didn't grow up with us, we're literary inside of you.

PEARL

I feel it. It's like you were always inside me, formless, and only now you've taken form in front of me.

FRANK

(Glancing at Kerry)

But you'll need to identify, young Pearl, which genes are the more destructive ones and which are the most helpful to others.

INT. IN THE LIVINGROOM - A LITTLE LATER

The four of them sit with cups of tea and are still heavily involved in conversation, but Frank is nodding off . . .

Kerry is watching Frank.

KERRY

He'll start snoring soon. Sorry about that.

PEARL

We're wearing him out already.

KERRY

No, honey, I'd say it's jetlag more than anything else.

DOUGLAS

We do realize how much of a shock this must be. Really.

KERRY

It hasn't sunken in, yet. Pearl, you have my mother's eyes. And, luckily, you have her figure as well.

DOUGLAS

Is she still with us?

KERRY

No, Douglas. In 2017, your grandmother and grandfather decided to take their own lives so they could go together.

PEARL

That's awful.

DOUGLAS

(To Pearl)

It's more common than you'd think.

KERRY

They were both ninety-seven-years old, had lived full lives and were in terrible pain. They just didn't want to lie around and wait for it. They couldn't even walk anymore. Anyway, they took all kinds of pills, put plastic bags over their heads and left.

(MORE)

KERRY (CONT'D)

And of course your other grandparents on Frank's side died within two years of each other in the early two's.

Frank becomes alert.

FRANK

I thought it was disgusting.

PEARL

The suicide?

FRANK

Suicide's fine. It was their choice how they wanted to go. What's disgusting is that they never knew you guys. I'm telling you, it's completely fucked.

KERRY

This will never end, will it?

FRANK

You, Kerry, will never give me shit about anything ever again because now, you are, by far, the biggest manure maker in this marriage, in any marriage. All these years taking the moral high ground on literally every issue. Your parents would have loved these two and I'm sure Pearl's mother, Kristin, as well. Pearl, Douglas--you guys need to study this lady on the garishness of hypocrisy.

PEARL

Sure, grandpa, we'll do that, but would later be okay?

FRANK

Oh, yeah, sure! What a world!

KERRY

Although I do acknowledge my crime, I feel just as hypocritical apologizing for a crime I committed so long ago. I'm just so happy we're all together now. Why ruin this moment with regrets?

FRANK

Water under the bridge, right? It's more like mounds of shit under the bridge.

PEARL

Please, grandpa?

FRANK

Pearl, you have my mother's eyes.

KERRY

I already told her she had my mother's eyes.

PEARL

I'll take both?

FRANK

Whatever. You're a beautiful child.

Douglas starts nodding off. Everyone takes notice.

PEARL

Daddy has Epstein Bar.

FRANK

Does anybody really have Epstein Bar?

KERRY

Frank, I can assure you they do. It can be debilitating.

PEARL

He's had it for two years.

KERRY

Are you sure it's not chronic fatigue syndrome?

PEARL

That, too, I guess. Daddy's always fatigued these days. I mean, he can't even hold down a job. But that's not why we're here.

FRANK

What the Hell. It's fine. We have gobs of money and nothing to spend it on. I'm sure we can take care of our son and granddaughter until Douglas gets better. By the way, I would have given him another name.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)
Douglas? Kind of boring and too
white, if you ask me.

PEARL
His adoptive parents gave him that
name.

KERRY
Where are they now?

PEARL
I never knew them. They were killed
in a car crash when daddy was
eight. If you're not a baby, daddy
said, nobody wants to adopt you, so
he lived in a London orphanage
until he was eighteen. Then daddy
met mom--she was a beautiful Irish
blonde--and they had me when they
were both nineteen.

FRANK
Well, kudos for Douglas and your
mother for actually not giving you
up.

Pearl cringes.

PEARL
Oh, I didn't mean to re-open that
can of pudding.

KERRY
Not yours to worry about, honey.
He's gonna jab me whenever he can.
I deserve it. The abuse will
plateau one day and lesson, bit by
bit.

FRANK
Don't count on that, Kerry.

PEARL
Anyway, when mom and dad were
taking classes at the University of
London, a neighbor watched over me
most days.

FRANK
How about your mom's parents?

PEARL

Mom was an orphan, too. In fact, she'd been housed in the same orphanage, only in the girl's wing, so daddy didn't actually meet her until they were both discharged.

FRANK

Fascinating.

PEARL

Daddy did see her many times from afar. There was a chain-link fence separating the boy's and girl's playgrounds, which you could see through.

KERRY

Romantic. Did she notice him?

PEARL

Daddy said, during the times she did gaze at him, he could see the in-and-out of her chest because of a speeding heart.

FRANK

Damn. Go Douglas.

KERRY

That's lovely.

PEARL

When I was seven, we moved to Berkeley and mom and daddy got teaching jobs at the same high school.

KERRY

Why Berkeley?

There's silence.

KERRY (CONT'D)

Don't tell me Douglas waited this long to come to us.

Douglas opens his eyes.

DOUGLAS

I was tempted hundreds of times to approach you.

(MORE)

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

Sometimes, I'd step into the same restaurant, you know, that Indian restaurant you guys like?

KERRY

Yeah, the one they just tore down.

FRANK

Gajur?

DOUGLAS

That's the one. I would just sit, eat my curry and watch you guys. Sometimes I got close enough to eavesdrop on your conversations. For years, I've known about your professorships, where your offices are on campus, where you live.

FRANK

Why didn't you approach us? Think of all the years we missed out on.

DOUGLAS

For you, I guess, but for me it was enough to simply see you on occasion, knowing you two were okay. That was enough for me, well, until it wasn't.

FRANK

To think, for years we were stalked by our own son.

DOUGLAS

I was afraid to approach you, I guess. You were so successful within your own worlds. I didn't want to put any strain on that. You seemed so deeply involved.

FRANK

We were okay, would've been a lot better with a son and granddaughter and of course a daughter in law. Would've been nice if we could've helped you through your grief when you lost your wife.

DOUGLAS

I'm sorry, dad. I was too intimidated; I guess I just didn't know how to be a son.

KERRY

How about a little media from yours truly, Satin herself: Frank loves to punish the people he loves. It brings him a perverse pleasure.

Frank stands and paces.

FRANK

Oh, yeah, I'm feelin' the pleasure. The pleasure! Oh, yeah! Next thing you know, she'll throw in animal torture. Oh, yeah, that really gets me high!

KERRY

Now that you mention it, you did torture Shirley's cat.

FRANK

Bullshit, that cat had just scratched the Hell of me, and I was just . . .

KERRY

. . . ripping her arms out of their sockets.

FRANK

Oh, God. I was keeping her from scratching me. Goddammit!

KERRY

Then you threw her across Shirley's living room.

FRANK

Then why didn't Shirley make a fuss. She knew the truth.

Douglas nods off, again.

INT. THE FOYER - AN HOUR LATER

There's a knock on the door.

Frank hurries in from the living room to answer it.

It's Shirley holding a pie.

SHIRLY

I would've used my key, but I forgot it. Good to have you back, Fred.

FRANK

It's Frank. Nice to see you, too, Shirley.

SHIRLY

Where's Karen.

FRANK

KERRY's in the other room.

Kerry enters the foyer.

KERRY

Shirly, it's great to see you!

Shirly gazes at Kerry as though she can't quite remember who she is.

Kerry gives Shirley a gentle hug.

KERRY (CONT'D)

Thank you for watching the place, again, Shirley, but it would've been better had you let us know that our son and granddaughter were here.

SHIRLY

Oh, Kerry. Kerry. Of course, well, you know. I thought they. I thought. I thought . . .

FRANK

. . . Douglas and Pearl?

SHIRLY

Douglas and Pearl let you know they were here.

Shirly looks around.

SHIRLY (CONT'D)

Where are they?

FRANK

I gave them a few hundred bucks to pick up a bunch of food at the grocery store. I gave Pearl the car keys. She has her driver's permit.

SHIRLY

Oh, yes, the grocery store. Isn't it wonderful? I could just spend the whole day in produce. I love the smell.

Just then, Douglas and Pearl enter through the front door with several bags of groceries.

Pearl quickly gives Shirley a kiss on the cheek.

Shirly smiles and giggles.

SHIRLY (CONT'D)

(To Frank and Kerry)

Palate and I are best buddies!

PEARL

It's PEARL. And that's right. Took us about one day to become besties.

SHIRLY

When I have my thinking cap on, I even help . . . Pamala with her homework.

PEARL

(Gently)

Oops, Shirley, I'm Pearl. Pearl. It's okay.

Out of Shirley's view, Pearl winks at everyone.

DOUGLAS

Shirly, did you bring us a pie today?

SHIRLY

Well, no . . .

Pearl quickly takes hold of the pie.

SHIRLY (CONT'D)

Well, I guess I did . . . But I couldn't tell ya what kind.

FRANK

Smells like cherry?

SHIRLY

Oh, my, yes. I was in the produce section, and those cherries looked at me like a bunch of happy hearts.

KERRY

Shirly, dear, are you keeping up on
all of your medication?

Douglas, standing and looking on, appears faint.

PEARL

Well, when Shirly's caregiver isn't
around, I always check her dose
dispensers. She is up to date. I'm
usually the one at Walgreens
picking up the prescriptions.
Before daddy and I moved in, Shirly
wasn't keeping up on meds, and she
was forgetting appointments with
her neurologist. The caregiver she
had at that time was incompetent.
We made sure she got a new one.

FRANK

Good girl, Pearl. When we're in
town, we usually check on all that.

SHIRLY

Why, Pearl even cooks for me
sometimes. I love those fish and
chips. And she taught me how to eat
them with vinegar instead of tarter
sauce.

Meanwhile, Douglas is becoming unsteady on his feet.

KERRY

Pearl, Shirly's nearly ninety.
Think she should be eating fish and
chips? Arguably the most unhealthy
meal in the world?

SHIRLY

No worries! I take extra statins.

KERRY

I'm not sure if that . . .

Suddenly, Douglas puts a hand to his forehead and falls
backward onto the floor.

FRANK

Jesus Christ, Douglas!

PEARL

Daddy! Daddy!

Kerry quickly gets on her knees next to Douglas and puts a palm to his forehead.

KERRY

There's a fever, over one hundred.
Frank, the BP monitor is in my
bedside table drawer.

Pearl turns toward the master bedroom.

PEARL

I'll get it!

Kerry checks Douglas's eyes and neck pulse.

Pearl quickly returns.

Douglas is trying to not pass out.

DOUGLAS

Holy shit. I'm so tired. So tired.

Kerry measures his BP and heart rate.

KERRY

His heart rate and BP are way too
high. Epstein Bar, huh? Douglas,
your pale. Pearl, does he often get
this pale and faint.

PEARL

A few times recently.

SHIRLY

Well, you know, they have Epstein
Bar at the grocery store in the
produce department.

Douglas, having a tough time keeping his breath, begins to stand with Frank's help.

DOUGLAS

Shirly, maybe you're thinking of
Mangosteen. That's the only fruit
with "steen" in it. They've been
getting lots of imports from
Southeast Asia.

SHIRLY

Yes, I think you're right. And they
also have Southeast Asians in the
produce department. Isn't that
wonderful?

Kerry gives Douglas an extremely worried look.

Douglas waves her off.

DOUGLAS

It'll pass.

Kerry moves her face up close to Douglas's ear and whispers.

KERRY

Epstein Bar, my ass. We'll talk later.

Douglas nods.

DOUGLAS

Yeah.

INT. FLORA'S BEAUTY SALON, BERKELEY - NEXT DAY - 9:00 AM

Flora, a Philippine American (50), is perming Shirley's hair.

Flora's daughter, Adeline (29), works the chair next to Flora's and is perming a Mexican American lady's hair by the name of Alexandria Rios(40), who happens to be Pearl's literature teacher in high school.

SHIRLY

Oh, Flora, you're a doll, sending Adeline to pick me up.

FLORA

She's a good daughter.

ADELINE

(To Shirley)

I'll take you back home, too, dear. Especially if you keep tipping me like ya do.

Giggles.

SHIRLY

I don't have much in my life to spend money on anymore, may as well be on you.

FLORA

Oh, yeah, we hear ya baby!

ADELINE

But, Shirley, come on. You don't have to give me fifty bucks. Forty nine would be fine.

Everybody laughs.

FLORA

Shirly, you are the nicest white lady we know. You're just, I don't know, pure or somethin'.

Alexandra looks over to Shirley.

ALEXANDRA

I wonder who their favorite Mexican American is?

Laughs.

ALEXANDRA (CONT'D)

Really, Shirley, your young friend Pearl is one of the best students I've had in my career. I mean, she can access Isabelle Allende better than I can. And Shakespeare, damn, she's operating at college grad school level.

SHIRLY

My boy Arnie would've loved her.

They all go quiet momentarily when something outside the front window gets Flora's attention.

FLORA

Oh, God, it's that young gangster. Look at him.

They all look out the window and witness Randy Whitehead at the other end of the parking lot standing next to his motorcycle.

He hands tiny-white plastic bags to what looks like middle school kids, and the kids give Randy money in return.

ALEXANDRA

Name's Randy. He doesn't even care who's lookin' anymore. He's a bad one. I've seen him around the high school making sales and picking up beautiful girls.

Shirly glares at Alexandra.

Alexandra glares at Shirley and immediately suspects Shirley is worried about Pearl.

Shirly panics a bit.

SHIRLY
Oh, no! Oh, no!

ALEXANDRA
(To Shirley)
I'm so sorry, Shirley . . . Is he
goin' after Pearl?

Shirly palms her forehead.

Flora and Adeline are very worried.

ALEXANDRA (CONT'D)
All the girls he takes out, Shirley,
end up hooked on drugs. He likes
the real young, real smart and
beautiful girls.

SHIRLY
What can I do? No, not Pearl!

ALEXANDRA
Oh, our principle's office has
called the cops on him many times,
and each time Randy's managed to
slip out, free as a skunk and just
as stinky.

FLORA
There must be something we can do.

ALEXANDRA
The only way this is gonna stop is
if he's in jail.

Shirly has calmed down and is contemplating.

SHIRLY
If I can keep my thinking cap on
long enough, I can come up with
something. There must be a way.

ADELINE
Shirly, Pearl will be in all of our
prayers.

ALEXANDRA
Prayers are wonderful, but they're
not the best for finding solutions.

FLORA

Alex, you're a good catholic lady.
I see you at mass praying. I mean,
you pray hard, girl.

ALEXANDRA

I'm a high school teacher, got a
lot to pray about. But I don't ask
God for solutions. What I actually
pray for is that I'll have the
strength and intellect to make my
own solutions work.

SHIRLY

Well, thanks, ladies.

Shirly's face looks as though a light, an idea, has just come
to her.

INT. INSIDE SHIRLY'S KITCHEN - SAME DAY - AFTERNOON

Shirly washes dishes as Pearl walks into the kitchen with a
school pack on her back.

Pearl hurries over and begins to dry the dishes in the dish
rack.

SHIRLY

Good morning, sweet Pearl.

PEARL

Is Olivia here right now?

SHIRLY

She's cleaning the bathroom for me.
Then she's gonna leave because I
have my thinking cap on today.

PEARL

Yeah, I can always see in your face
when you're good. In the last few
weeks, you've been fine most of the
time.

SHIRLY

Everything sort of expands when I'm
okay.

Pearl dries the last dish in the rack and puts it away.

PEARL

Got a few minutes?

SHIRLY
I'll put some water on. Mint tea?
Green tea?

PEARL
Green tea.

INT. SHIRLY'S KITCHEN TABLE - A LITTLE LATER
Shirly and Pearl sip tea and talk.

SHIRLY
How old is this boy?

PEARL
That could be a problem.

SHIRLY
Old enough to make you jail bate?

PEARL
And some. Twenty six.

SHIRLY
The one with the noisy motorcycle?

PEARL
He's been around twice when daddy
was at physical therapy. We talk on
the street.

SHIRLY
This one isn't for you, Pearl.
Trust me. You're smart and
beautiful enough to have anybody.
Trust me. Pick a boring young man.
Take him by the hand, Pearl, and
he's yours. And he won't stay
boring for long because you'll make
him exciting.

PEARL
Yeah?

SHIRLY
I don't know this boy--or man!--I
only saw him the two times outside
the house here, and, well, once
outside of Flora's.

PEARL
Flora's? What was he doing there?

SHIRLY

Up to no good!

Pearl tries to divert the issue.

PEARL

It's just that, when I'm with him, everything changes. It changes from darkness to light and joy.

SHIRLY

I'm gonna be honest, honey. At Flora's, I heard terrible things about him. He sells illegal drugs to children. I actually saw him in the parking lot doing it.

PEARL

What, he helps orphans and stuff at NGOs!

SHIRLY

If he's working at NGO's, then he's helping them to get high. I'm not lying to you, Pearl. Do yourself a favor, dear? Don't take your clothes off for him.

PEARL

Oh, awkward, never gone there with you. Awkward.

SHIRLY

I was born during the great depression. Think I haven't been naked with a man? I've been around. I'm not just a senile old lady. Believe me, once you do take your clothes off, he'll be hooked on you because he knows he'll never find another one like you.

PEARL

Really, he's that bad? I don't know. I mean, I do feel you, Shirley.

SHIRLY

Tell him you're too busy right now, too many responsibilities, which is true, and that you need space. If he can't handle that, then he's not worth your time.

(MORE)

SHIRLY (CONT'D)
Another thing, if he's doing drugs,
I mean, heroin, fentanyl, meth, the
bad ones, you'd be climbing down a
dark hole.

PEARL
You know a lot about drugs.

Suddenly, Shirley's face changes as she slips into a memory
lapse.

SHIRLY
Can I get you some tea?

PEARL
Oh, I just brought two new cups to
the table.

SHIRLY
Are you sure?

PEARL
Oops, Shirley! Thinking cap? The
tea's right in front of you and in
front of me.

Shirly looks down at the cups of tea.

SHIRLY
Oh, good, we're in my kitchen,
right?

PEARL
It's your kitchen, Shirley. Take it
slow.

Pearl points to some reminder cards on the kitchen wall.

PEARL (CONT'D)
See that card? Focus on that one.
"Take it slow. Don't hurry. Think
long and hard before you act."

SHIRLY
I feel ya, dear. It's Pearl, right?

Pearl smiles.

PEARL
You're okay.

They giggle.

SHIRLY
How long was I gone this time?

PEARL
Thirty seconds or so.

PEARL (CONT'D)
It bothers me that I never know how long I'm out. Really, to me, that thirty seconds is the same as hours or even days. I wonder if the tea shortens the spells.

Pearl looks at Shirley with a suspicious smile.

PEARL (CONT'D)
Wouldn't that be something? I guess "tea" miracles do happen.

Shirley raises her cup.

SHIRLY
Let's have a toast to "tea miracles."

Pearl, still with a suspicious smile, lifts her cup.

PEARL
What are you up to, Shirley?

SHIRLY
Up to no good, as usual.

They giggle.

INT. IN THE MONTANA LIVINGROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Kerry and Douglas are having a discussion.

DOUGLAS
Pearl's in the Journalism Club at school, but it seems she's leaning more toward science, probably medicine, well, like her grandmother.

KERRY
Journalism? Science? Such divergent disciplines.

DOUGLAS
That's the problem. She's good at everything.

(MORE)

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

She even excels in sports. She's the fastest female runner on the track and field team. She rocks in softball, basketball, you name it. She plays your old out-of-tune piano like a saint. I'd have had that tuned, but it costs two hundred dollars, minimum.

KERRY

I'll get it tuned. Hell, I'll call today. It's been so long since the last tune, though, our tuner guy, who was an older man twenty years ago, is probably dead by now.

Kerry leans toward Douglas, close enough to place a hand on his knee.

Douglas, while shedding a tear, looks away.

KERRY (CONT'D)

Now, Boy, tell me about the diagnosis, this time, the real one.

DOUGLAS

Acute Myeloid Leukemia, AML that's gotten a little out of hand.

Kerry takes a deep breath and closes her eyes.

KERRY

AML can be tough. Of course, that depends on many factors.

DOUGLAS

I've outsmarted it for almost two years, well, with a lot of help . . . But I can't fight it anymore, mum.

KERRY

Pearl thinks it's Epstein Bar? She needs to know the truth.

DOUGLAS

Oh, she suspects it's not Epstein Bar. But she just can't go there, you know, having lost her mum just a short time ago.

Kerry buries her forehead in her hands.

KERRY

This is why you've come now?

DOUGLAS

You'd love having Pearl, mum.

KERRY

I'd love having you, too.

DOUGLAS

Of all people, an MD/PhD geneticist, you should know that I have a nasty prognosis. If the cancer's not eating me up, those damn chemo infusions are.

KERRY

Infusion sessions can sometimes take hours. What do you tell Pearl?

DOUGLAS

Easy. I've scheduled them while she's at school.

Kerry stands, paces and thinks.

KERRY

There are always experimental therapies going on.

DOUGLAS

Might be too late for that. Plus, insurance doesn't cover those treatments. I've looked into it.

KERRY

There are grants. What grants don't cover, well, I think Frank and I could work something out.

DOUGLAS

Thank you, mum. But . . .

KERRY

God, I never knew how much I'd enjoy hearing somebody say that to me.

DOUGLAS

The word Mum?

KERRY

Listen, I've got a network here at Berkeley and at Stanford.

(MORE)

KERRY (CONT'D)

I'll drop everything else I'm doing. Of course!

DOUGLAS

I'm so, so tired, mum. I feel like an old rag that's been rung out thousands of times, all ripped and frayed.

KERRY

It's the treatment, but without it you'd be gone already. Do you want Frank and me there when you tell Pearl that you have cancer?

DOUGLAS

Tell Pearl? Right. Tell Pearl. Oh, shit. Tell Pearl.

KERRY

If you don't, I will.

DOUGLAS

I guess she's tough enough.

KERRY

Tough or weak, she has to know.

DOUGLAS

I'll tell her. I'll tell her today. How about Frank?

KERRY

Frank and I both knew something was serious when we first laid eyes on you, much less after you passed out in the kitchen last night. We know what chemo patients look like. Anyway, I'll fill him in on the details.

DOUGLAS

He's gonna feel pretty bad.

KERRY

Well, there's one good thing about it. He'll probably feel something.

DOUGLAS

Maybe you could give him a break. Imagine what he's already going through.

KERRY

A lot of it's our age; we just don't have enough patience with each other's faults anymore.

DOUGLAS

Maybe I'll live long enough to understand that.

Kerry puts a hand on Douglas's cheek.

KERRY

Dear boy.

Douglas kisses her hand.

EXT. OUT ON THE STREET IN FRONT OF SHIRLY'S HOUSE - THAT EVENING AROUND 6:00 PM

Pearl stands next to Randy Whitehead, who straddles his motorcycle.

Sweaty and gnashing his teeth, Randy's obviously high on speed.

PEARL

It's just that my family needs me right now. Randy, you know?

RANDY

You callin' it off?

PEARL

Puttin' it on pause. You know I like you . . . a lot! I just want to pause things before we get too serious.

RANDY

My stepdad has this antique tape player. When you press the pause button, it always sticks.

PEARL

I don't know how long, Randy. I just don't know, too much goin' on.

Randy takes Pearl's hand, and Pearl softens.

RANDY

I ache for you, baby.

PEARL

When I do see you, again, I don't want you to be high. You're better than that.

RANDY

That's not fair. You get to be my momma now? You already have too much power over me. My momma's in prison, ya know, haven't seen her in years, never want to see her. I don't need you to be my mother.

PEARL

I really need to put this on pause for now, Randy. For now.

RANDY

Okay, I'm out of here. Can I at least have a long ass kiss?

Pearl hesitates then gives him a kiss, at which point he grabs her breast and squeezes hard.

Pearl pulls away.

PEARL

Fuck you, Randy!

Pearl hurries away.

Randy laughs and revs his motorcycle.

He then cries out to Pearl.

RANDY

I don't just want you, Pearl. I need you. I need you.

Pearl turns around and gives him a look of empathy, then turns back around and continues on to the Montana house.

Randy rides away.

INT. PEARL'S BEDROOM IN THE MONTANA HOUSE - THAT EVENING -
7:30 PM

Pearl's studying at a desk when Douglas cracks open the door.

Douglas is obviously afraid to tell her about his cancer.

DOUGLAS

There's my girl studying. I thought you'd be too distracted to study right now.

PEARL

I want to ace an exam coming up.

Pearl, with a playful smile, turns to Douglas.

PEARL (CONT'D)

Also, I need a distraction from all of the distractions.

When Douglas doesn't respond with similar playfulness, Pearl gets worried.

Douglas tries to lighten up.

DOUGLAS

Hey, you could be like your grandmother someday.

PEARL

Grandma's nice, but I'd rather be like me.

DOUGLAS

I need to tell you something, Pearl. Have you a moment?

Pearl suspects something bad is coming.

PEARL

Not really.

DOUGLAS

This is a "must talk." Not a "want to talk."

PEARL

I don't want a "must talk," daddy.

Pearl starts to tear up.

Douglas makes his way to Pearl, who has turned her back to him.

Douglas puts a hand on her shoulder.

PEARL (CONT'D)

Oh, daddy. You're so full of shit. You know?

DOUGLAS

Oh, no, my sweet Pearl. I'm full of love.

PEARL

Oh, daddy. I am, too. I am, too.

INT. MONTANA LIVINGROOM - ABOUT HALF AN HOUR LATER

Frank and Kerry have been waiting for Douglas and Pearl, who now enter.

Kerry and Frank stand, up and there's a group hug.

Then they all sit down.

PEARL

I've always known it wasn't just Epstein Bar. But I didn't want to go there.

FRANK

Little girl, we are gonna take hold of this situation, and we are going to handle it. Understand? We're gonna handle it together.

DOUGLAS

Poor mum and dad. It's all blowing up in your faces.

KERRY

Better our faces than somebody else's. Look, Pearl, I've been on the horn with some of the most intelligent oncologists in the country who are experimenting with all kinds of hormone therapies, Crispr gene therapies. There is hope. There are possibilities.

PEARL

They said there was hope for my mum, too.

FRANK

Pearl, your mother didn't have the same army of resources available to her. Your daddy does. I agree with your grandma, honey. Your daddy's made it this far. Maybe he's been holding on just for us and our resources.

PEARL

I want to be strong. But, daddy, I won't make it if you go, too. Nobody's that strong. I'm a kid. I know I look and act older, but my heart is still a kid's.

Pearl starts to cry, again.

Then she has a full breakdown.

Frank and Kerry hurry over to her and take her in their arms.

Douglas cries.

INT. INSIDE THE MONTANA KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Kerry is on her phone with an old colleague, Dr. Greta Johansen.

GRETA (O.S.)

Kerry, I understand, but he might be too far along into stage four.

KERRY

Greta, because of the Nobel, I know it's raining grants in your world. Isn't there one of them that you can utilize for this?

GRETA (O.S.)

Your son? Really?

KERRY

Douglas just appeared out of nowhere, and he's, well, wonderful and so is my granddaughter.

GRETA (O.S.)

Before anything starts moving, I've got to get a hold of his records, everything. I'll contact Saint Francis Memorial, myself.

KERRY

Oh, God, thank you, Greta!

GRETA (O.S.)

We're friends, honey. But, I need you to know from the start, by the sound of this--mind you, I haven't seen his records, yet--it's gonna be like hiking uphill with a locomotive on our backs.

KERRY

Oh . . .

GRETA (O.S.)

. . . but there is a chance. I've seen a few remarkable outcomes recently with our new treatments. I'll start pushing buttons. If we get the go-ahead, we'll need him at Stanford. That's a not-too-long commute for you guys, I know . . .

KERRY

. . . I'd commute to Mars.

GRETA (O.S.)

Good. Good.

KERRY

We'll have Douglas ready whenever you are.

INT. SHIRLY'S KITCHEN TABLE - ABOUT THE SAME TIME THAT MORNING

Pearl and Shirley are eating fruit and sipping tea.

SHIRLY

So, you sent the boy on his way?

PEARL

God, Randy looks so much like daddy. A lighter-skinned daddy.

SHIRLY

People often marry based on familiar physical characteristics. He reminds you of Douglas, but he's not, I repeat, not Douglas. You'd wake up one day in the future and realize, "He's nothing like daddy." Just looks like him a little. That's never a reason to stay with somebody.

(MORE)

SHIRLY (CONT'D)

You didn't answer my question. Did you send him on his way?

PEARL

I told him I had things to work out. I told him a little about what was going on.

SHIRLY

Not a good idea to tell somebody like that about your private life. They'll find a way to use the information to manipulate you, dear.

PEARL

I don't think Randy would do that. He's not that smart.

Shirly chuckles.

SHIRLY

And don't think that because he's stupid you can control him. No. No, my dear. Too many smart girls make that mistake. Stupid people can't connect the dots like you can. Goodness, the two of you will be talking about something important someday, and, well, you'll be connecting the dots like magic, and he won't even know where the dots are! And when he finally realizes you're light years smarter than he is, he'll always think you're conspiring against him.

PEARL

How can a man that beautiful be dumb?

SHIRLY

It's why he goes for the jail bait, honey. He senses that he's no match for a woman with a little wisdom under her belt.

PEARL

I'm not wise?

SHIRLY

Yes. . . for a fifteen-year-old girl.

PEARL

I wish wisdom would hurry up and find me.

Shirly, now moving her head around as if looking for something, loses her thinking cap, again.

SHIRLY

Oh, things. Things just. Things are happening all the time. Oh, my, yes, all the time. The boy doesn't give a rats ass about you. He just wants your luscious young body!

Pearl becomes embarrassed and annoyed.

PEARL

Shirly. I'll go outside and water those plants for you.

Pearl gets up and walks toward the kitchen door that leads to the backyard.

SHIRLY

Plants? Where? Oh, my God. Plants?

Shirly stands and turns in circles.

SHIRLY (CONT'D)

Did you say plants? Oh, my God! Are the plants going to snatch our bodies. Oh, my God!

Pearl hurries over to her and gently maneuvers her back into her chair, then pulls a chair over, sits next to her and takes her hand.

Shirly is still disoriented.

SHIRLY (CONT'D)

Oh, my, thank you, young lady.

PEARL

I'm here, sweet Shirly. I'm here.

SHIRLY

Oh, you're so beautiful. Do I know you?

PEARL

You know me so well, Shirly.

SHIRLY

Invasion of the body snatchers.
It's happening, you know. It's
happening right now.

PEARL

Yes, Shirley, but not in this
kitchen.

SHIRLY

Well, that's good to know, dear.

PEARL

Have more tea, Shirley.

Shirly looks around for tea and finds it on the table. Then
she smiles at the tea.

SHIRLY

We're gonna be fine, my dear. We're
gonna be fine.

INT. MONTANA LIVINGROOM - BEFORE LUNCH

Douglas, looking pale and ashen, is talking with Kerry.

DOUGLAS

Like I said, mum, I'm just so damn
tired. I've been fighting too long.
I mean, my oncologist told me to
put things in order.

KERRY

I always thought the "in order"
part was ridiculous. I mean, how
the Hell can you do that? Put what
in order?

DOUGLAS

Yeah, I don't have much.

Kerry gets a little angry.

KERRY

I don't mean material crap. Do
doctors mean "put your life in
order?" Well, it could very well
end soon. So, you suddenly put it
in order when it's too late? Why
aren't we told to do this from day
one of our lives? Why doesn't
anybody show us how to do this?

DOUGLAS

Calm down. I'm not dead, yet.

KERRY

If we get the worst case scenario,
we've got Pearl covered, Douglas.
But, damnit, we want you, too.

DOUGLAS

Where's dad?

KERRY

He had to finish up his sabbatical
reports, said he'd be back after
lunch. Douglas, we want as much
time with you as possible. Please,
don't give up.

DOUGLAS

You don't understand, mum. I've
already given up.

KERRY

Oh, I'm not getting on the "give
up" train.

DOUGLAS

Yeah, this time you're not?

Kerry starts to cry.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

Why the Hell did I say that? Mum, I
didn't mean it. I'm sorry. I'm
sorry.

KERRY

You're an honest man, and for that
I'm grateful. Douglas, I have been
so selfish in my life. When you
were born, I had the ability to
look you in your beautiful eyes and
not really give a damn. It was all
about me. And it was also about
vengeance.

DOUGLAS

Against me? A newborn?

KERRY

Against Frank.

DOUGLAS

Dad?

KERRY

He was having an affair with his
grad assistant.

Douglas is taken aback.

DOUGLAS

Does he know that you're aware?

KERRY

God, he's always been so engrossed
in his work, I wouldn't be
surprised if he's forgotten about
her. I don't think he's aware that
I know. But, he's unaware of
anything that happens out of his
professional sphere.

DOUGLAS

I want to love him.

KERRY

You've had a child, dear. Children
distract us somewhat from our jobs.
Shit, with Frank and me, it's as
though we never left work to go
home.

DOUGLAS

So, they want me in Palo Alto? Only
an hour or so away.

KERRY

Yes, honey, as soon as we get the
call. Keep a bag packed.

DOUGLAS

I love it when you call me "honey."
Pearl sometimes calls me that . . .
well, because she knows Kristin
did.

KERRY

And I love it when you call me mum.
You know, I've always heard you say
"mum" in my daydreams. I heard it
as if it was coming from some
underworld of hope.

Douglas smiles but can barely keep his eyes open.

DOUGLAS

Sometimes it's all I can do to sit
up in my chair. Can you help me
pack my bag?

Kerry gets up to snuggle up against Douglas.

KERRY

You go ahead and let me take some
of that weight off.

Douglas puts his head on Kerry's shoulder.

Douglas quickly falls asleep.

Kerry leans her head on his head and smiles.

INT. IN THE MONTANA KITCHEN - TWO DAYS LATER

Kerry is on the phone with Greta.

GRETA (O.S.)

We've got a chance with one of the
grants, but the benefactors are
being stubborn.

KERRY

Hey, then, Frank and I will cover
it.

GRETA (O.S.)

To start this process, you'd have
to prove that you've got at least a
million bucks in a bank account;
then, they'd need a one hundred
thousand dollar deposit.

KERRY

What the Hell?

GRETA (O.S.)

The case evaluator is being an anal
retentive asshole. He thinks he's
just doing his job. I'll keep
working on the prick.

KERRY

Did you tell him . . . Did you tell
him . . .

GRETA (O.S.)

. . . that we're running out of
time? Yes, many times.

(MORE)

GRETA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Last resort--I'll tell him that
this Nobel laureate will no longer
be interested in applying for their
grants. And, of course, I'll let
everyone in my field know why. This
is not only a sentimental journey.
After going over Douglas's records,
I'm even more committed to this. If
we show substantial improvement in
his condition, that would be
consequential. That's what fucking
grants are for, and they always
forget that!

KERRY
I've thrown you into the weeds,
Greta.

GRETA (O.S.)
Fuck weeds. I flame-throw weeds.
You know me! Be back with you soon.

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF MONTANA HOME - NEXT EVENING

Pearl and Douglas drink iced tea on the front porch.

PEARL
What's not fair is that I can't get
mad at you for deceiving me, daddy.
Damn, while I was at school, you
were at the infusion center? I was
so stupid not to see it.

DOUGLAS
You can be angry with me, Pearl.
You've earned that right.

PEARL
How can I get pissed off at the
nicest person in Berkeley?

DOUGLAS
What's up with the older man, my
dear?

PEARL
Randy?

DOUGLAS
Yes, that one.

PEARL

He is the only older man in my life.

DOUGLAS

(Sarcastic)

Well, that's reassuring.

PEARL

Twenty six isn't old.

DOUGLAS

You're fifteen, honey, and I'm not strong enough right now to pick you up if you fall down.

PEARL

No worries, I put him on pause.

DOUGLAS

Oh, like he's waiting there with his smartphone for you to someday pick up? People won't do that for long without eventually getting angry. I'm in no condition to fend off an angry young bloke. I saw him cruising past just yesterday. He's keeping an eye on you. And even a fool can figure out that he's into drugs.

PEARL

Daddy, concentrate on getting better. Don't worry about me.

DOUGLAS

You're the reason I want to get better.

PEARL

What's taking those doctors so long? Why . . .

DOUGLAS

Mum just phoned me before you walked out. They're ready for me at Stanford. I have to be ready to go tomorrow morning.

Frank steps out onto the porch.

FRANK

I heard, Douglas. Good news. Good news, indeed! Did you tell Pearl the whole story?

DOUGLAS

(To Pearl)

Oh, yeah, I could be gone for weeks.

FRANK

We'll take you down there, Pearl, as often as we can. He'll be in insolation, so you won't be able to hug him or anything, but you'll be able to see him through a widow and talk to him through an intercom.

DOUGLAS

(To Pearl)

Isolation because the treatment will compromise my immune system for a while.

PEARL

It's already compromised.

DOUGLAS

I mean compromised down to nothing.

PEARL

So . . . So . . .

FRANK

. . . a cold would kill him. Douglas, Kerry's gonna be back from Palo Alto real soon. She'll give you more info: what to bring, what to expect. It sounds like they're gonna work you over. More bone marrow extraction, all that and more.

Douglas manages to muster a little excitement.

DOUGLAS

Bring it on, bitch.

FRANK

That's my boy!

Pearl hops up and kisses Douglas on the face.

PEARL

I won't be able to do this, again,
for a while. I love you, daddy.
Don't worry about me.

FRANK

Pearl, here's an old saying for
you: If my son has a good looking
teenage boy, we have to worry about
only one boy. But if he has a
beautiful teenage girl, that means
he's gotta worry about every boy in
town. You understand?

PEARL

I'm not that pretty!

FRANK

When you and I were shopping at the
grocery store yesterday, you had
about six men following you,
sometimes walking past you to get a
closer look, and they weren't shy
about it. I mean, their eyes had to
take you in all the way or else.
Wild animals. I actually fear for
you.

DOUGLAS

Dad, thanks for your concern, but
please don't say that to her. I
just can't handle it right now. I
mean, the world is already coming
at me like hungry bats.

FRANK

Just trying to help out. I guess I
need grandpa practice.

DOUGLAS

You're a terrific grandpa, dad;
it's just that I'm not terrific
right now.

INT. SHIRLY'S LIVINGROOM - TWO DAYS LATER - MORNING

Shirly, knitting a hat, is chatting with Pearl.

SHIRLY

This hat will be finished today.
It's yours, you know. It's for the
foggy, chilly mornings.

PEARL

Baby blue is my favorite color.

SHIRLY

Knitting really does help with the "you know what." And, ya know, it's Guernsey wool. Only the best for my Pearl.

PEARL

It's beautiful. By the way, you've had your thinking cap on a lot lately.

SHIRLY

I'm trying extra hard for you, honey.

PEARL

You work too hard for me. If helping me weren't so good for you, well, I wouldn't let you do it.

Shirly giggles.

SHIRLY

Can't stop me!

SHIRLY (CONT'D)

Take some oatmeal cookies home, dear. They're on the kitchen counter.

PEARL

Walnuts and . . .

SHIRLY

. . . and raisons, yes. And I didn't screw them up this time. I tried them, and they're yummy.

PEARL

I get to go see daddy tomorrow.

SHIRLY

How is Douglas?

PEARL

Grandma says he looks worse than he actually is. They won't even allow him to have books to read. I know he could use his Tao Te Ching right now. I guess they're feeding him rice pudding or something.

(MORE)

PEARL (CONT'D)

They're gonna do a bone marrow the day after tomorrow. They say he'll be there a fortnight at minimum.

SHIRLY

Does fortnight mean four weeks?

PEARL

It actually means two weeks.

SHIRLY

Then why not say tweeknight?

PEARL

Tweek . . . What?

SHIRLY

I'm just kidding. I've read all of Agatha Christi.

Pearl laughs.

PEARL

God, you're too clear today.

Shirly reaches over to a sofa-side table, opens a small drawer and pulls out a photo of a young man in uniform.

SHIRLY

Honey, may I tell you about my late son, Arnie?

Shirly hands the picture to Pearl.

PEARL

Is this a picture of him? Wow, he was so handsome.

SHIRLY

Tell me if I've already told you about him.

PEARL

Well, you have told me some, but you've never shown me a picture of him. Wow, he was hot, I mean, very handsome.

SHIRLY

He was only twenty when he was killed in De Nang, Vietnam, in the year 1971, when the war was winding down.

PEARL
It's so sad, Shirley.

SHIRLY
He would've fallen for you, dear. I
just know it.

Pearl smiles at the photo.

PEARL
I think you're right. I mean, he
was sick.

SHIRLY
No, honey, he wasn't sick. He was
shot in the head.

PEARL
Oh, no, sick means super wonderful!

SHIRLY
Oh, my. What a world.
Even though Arnie's been gone for a
very long time, I think he can
teach you a lesson. You see,
because he was our only child, he
didn't have to go to war. He
enlisted. Oh, my husband, Jack, and
I were anti-war academic types,
always going to rallies, getting
our heads bashed in by cops. The
problem was, Arnie had a rebellious
side. He thought we should be more
patriotic. In fact, our anti-war
fervor embarrassed him. We begged
him not to enlist, but he had
something to prove. We told him
that he could lose his life and
that we could lose him, our only
child. But he didn't listen. Poor
Jack, even in his deathbed twenty
years ago, he was trying to think
of things he could've done to stop
Arnie from going. I think Jack's
regrets killed him.

PEARL
Arnie didn't understand the
consequences.

SHIRLY

The lesson is, if Arnie had listened to his parents, who were far wiser than he was, and could clearly see the consequences, he would not have joined the army. And he would still be here today. It's not that I don't value my son's contribution to freedom. But I'd rather he were here with me. Understand this, honey: the choices we make when we're young build the engine that powers us for the rest of our lives.

PEARL

I understand.

Shirly glances at Pearl with doubt.

PEARL (CONT'D)

Shirly, I'll do my best.

SHIRLY

You know, my greatest fear regarding my memory loss is losing my memory of Arnie, which would leave me little reason to remain in this life. And I don't want to forget who you are either. When that time comes, I won't be here to teach you things.

Pearl sheds some tears.

PEARL

I feel you, dear Shirly.

SHIRLY

There will be plenty of time for you to enjoy your sexual power. Believe me, you don't have to start now.

PEARL

We've already talked about this, Shirly.

SHIRLY

Once is never enough when you're worried about someone you love.

PEARL
Listen, you know I hear you, but
I've got to get going.

Pearl, getting impatient, stands up.

PEARL (CONT'D)
See you soon, okay?

Pearl starts to leave the house when Shirly calls out.

SHIRLY
Don't forget the cookies!

Pearl doesn't hear Shirly and forgets the cookies.

INT. STANFORD MEDICAL CENTER, PALO ALTO - NEXT MORNING

Pearl and Kerry sit alone in Greta's office.

PEARL
I think this marrow extraction
frightens you.

KERRY
It's gonna take a lot out of him,
honey.

PEARL
Right, it could kill him. Those
times he'd come home from what he
said was "Epstein Bar" treatment--
God, he looked so awful.

The office door opens and it's Greta.

GRETA
(To Pearl)
So this is Pearl?

Greta and Pearl shake hands.

GRETA (CONT'D)
I've heard so many wonderful things
about you. Call me Greta!

PEARL
Nice to meet you, Greta. Thank you
for everything.

Pearl looks around Greta's office.

PEARL (CONT'D)

I heard you won so many honors. I'm just wondering why the awards aren't on your office walls.

GRETA

All those prizes mean to me is the funds they generate for research. I don't give a damn about anything else. Plus, I think bragging is boring.

PEARL

I want to be a doctor, too.

GRETA

Good for you, but you'll need to be okay with almost zero vacations.

PEARL

I can take vacations in my dreams.

GRETA

Well, as a medical researcher, you'd certainly need those dreams. Oh, yes, let's talk about your father.

PEARL

I'm afraid to.

GRETA

I understand. But afraid or not, I'm going to talk.

PEARL

Okay, I'm here.

GRETA

As you know, your father's not in good shape, and we're here to try and change that. Now, we've already started treatment, which has him weaker than the last time you saw him.

PEARL

Is my daddy going to die?

GRETA

There's a good chance he'll die and a good chance he'll live.

PEARL

So you don't know. I mean, I don't want to sound ungrateful.

GRETA

Well, goddammit, girl, he's your father. It's okay. Listen, I have a mission here. Yes, it's for you and your father, first, but it's also for the furthering of medical science. This is very important shit here. If your father improves even just a little, it's a major success. If he lives through this and achieves longevity, the findings from that could be a fucking game changer.

Pearl is confused.

PEARL

You don't act like a doctor.

GRETA

I don't think of myself as a doctor. I'm more of a hunter of life saving solutions. My medical background is just one of my many hunting rifles.

INT. ISOLATION WARD - ABOUT TEN MINUTES LATER

Pearl stands at the observation window of Douglas's room; he's sleeping and is hooked up to many tubes and IV's.

Kerry walks up to her.

KERRY

They said he was just too weak to stay awake for your visit, honey. And they don't want to wake him because he needs the rest right now.

PEARL

I was just hoping to tell him I love him.

Kerry gives Pearl a pen and a note pad.

KERRY

Here, write him a note, and the nurse can read it to him when he wakes up.

PEARL

He can't read it, himself?

KERRY

He can't touch anything from outside his room unless it can be disinfected with spray.

Pearl takes a moment to take in all the tubes and machines Douglas is hooked up to.

PEARL

He's hooked up to everything in the world.

KERRY

Just about.

Pearl's mood darkens.

PEARL

Oh, God. I'm going to lose daddy, too.

Kerry gently grabs Pearl's shoulders.

KERRY

At least there's a chance now, honey. Let's hold on to that.

PEARL

I'm going to write a note, and then can we drive back?

KERRY

Take your time. Do me a favor, put in a good word for your grandma, grandpa, and Shirley.

Pearl cracks a slight smile.

PEARL

Of course.

EXT. DOWN THE STREET FROM THE MONTANA HOUSE - THAT EVENING -
AROUND 8:00 PM

Pearl is standing and moping on the street in front of
Shirly's house when Randy pulls up on his motorcycle.

Randy cuts the engine.

Pearl slowly walks up to Randy and lobs her head onto his
shoulder.

RANDY
That bad, huh?

PEARL
Pretty bad.

RANDY
Well, you've come to the right
place, sweetie. Get on!

Pearl looks around.

PEARL
I don't know.

RANDY
You called me. Get on, Pearl. No
worries. I'm just here to make you
feel better.

Randy gets off the motorcycle and opens the seat and takes
out an extra helmet and holds it out toward Pearl.

Randy smiles big.

RANDY (CONT'D)
So you don't crack that beautiful
head of yours.

PEARL
I don't feel beautiful.

RANDY
If you get on, you'll feel
beautiful soon, baby. I guarantee
it.

Pearl takes the helmet but has a hard time putting it on.

Randy helps her with it.

RANDY (CONT'D)
Don't worry. I'll be gentle.

They both mount the motorcycle and take off.

EXT. THE FRONT WINDOW OF SHIRLY'S HOUSE - SIMULTANEOUS

Shirly has been watching Pearl and Randy through the front window, and is deeply saddened and worried.

SHIRLY

Oh, my sweet Pearl. He's the devil
and you don't even know it.

INT. MONTANA LIVINGROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Frank and Kerry sit for a talk when they hear Shirly at the front door.

SHIRLY

Hey, kids! You around?

FRANK

In the living room, Shirly!

KERRY

Come in, Shirly!

A frantic Shirly enters the living room and hurries over to Frank and Kerry.

FRANK

You saw what just happened?

SHIRLY

From the front window.

SHIRLY (CONT'D)

She's only fifteen, for God's sake.

KERRY

All we can do is hope that Pearl
has enough sense to not get too
involved.

SHIRLY

I heard him talking to Pearl the
other day, and he was higher than a
kite. I mean, he could barely
balance on his motorcycle.

FRANK

I wonder what Douglas would do.

SHIRLY

Oh, I bet he'd get to know the boy.
Douglas likes to be nice to
everyone.

KERRY

Wouldn't Douglas be worried?

SHIRLY

He'd be worried sick. Think we
should call the police?

KERRY

We could do that, but they wouldn't
be able to do much because a crime
hasn't been committed.

SHIRLY

There will be a crime tonight.
Kerry, I don't have my smartphone.
Can you text Pearl to see if she's
okay?

KERRY

Already sent her a "If you need
anything, let us know."

Kerry looks at her smartphone.

KERRY (CONT'D)

No, reply.

SHIRLY

Can I wait with you two?

FRANK

Spend the night, if you'd like. Use
Douglas's bed. Sheets are clean.

SHIRLY

Oh, there's no way I can sleep. By
the way, you wouldn't believe what
I saw while getting my hair done at
Flora's . . .

INT. MONTANA LIVINGROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Shirly, Kerry, and Frank are still talking when Kerry
receives a text from Pearl.

KERRY READING PEARL'S TEXT

I just can't watch my daddy die.
It's too much.

FRANK

What the Hell does she mean by that? Kids are such shitty communicators.

Shirly points at Kerry's smartphone.

SHIRLY

If there ever was a time . . .

KERRY

. . . this is fucking agony. I'm calling the police.

INT. MONTANA LIVINGROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Officer Barbara Baldwin is in the living room with Frank, Kerry and Shirly. Everybody's standing.

OFFICER BALDWIN

Dr. Montana, you were smart to get his plate number. We do know Randy Whitehead, and we know about his activities. But, you must understand that even if we find them, we can't arrest Randy unless he's committed a crime, but we're gonna do a "welfare check," okay?

FRANK

Can you be more specific? What do you mean by "activities?"

OFFICER BALDWIN

Sorry, sir, we can't be more specific at this time. Suffice to say, if Kerry hadn't brought up Randy's name when you called us, we wouldn't have addressed this issue as quickly.

SHIRLY

You saw Pearl's text, officer . . .

OFFICER BALDWIN

. . .and I understand everybody's concern. But kids, more times than not, say one thing when they mean something else. Okay, then, if there's nothing else at this time, I'll input this info on my squad car computer. The sooner the better. Okay?

KERRY
Anything you can do, officer.

OFFICER BALDWIN
We'll be in touch.

Officer Baldwin hurries out the front door.

INT. MONTANA LIVINGROOM - A WHILE LATER

Frank, Kerry and Shirley are still waiting for news about Pearl.

Frank looks at his watch.

FRANK
Christ, it's 1:00 AM.

KERRY
It's all just too much.

SHIRLY
I think she'll get herself through this mess. She has good character.

FRANK
Even if teenagers have character, they're often unaware of it.

They hear the sound of a motorcycle pulling up to the front curb.

They all stand and quickly go to the front window.

It's Randy with Pearl.

EXT. INSIDE OFFICER BALDWIN'S SQUAD CAR - SIMULTANEOUS

Officer Baldwin has spotted the motorcycle, and she stops about a block back. She calls dispatch.

OFFICER BALDWIN
I spotted the Honda motorcycle in question about a mile ago. I pursued well back. Now, they've stopped in front of Pearl's home, so I'm just gonna observe.

DISPATCHER
Yes, 270, advise staying back for a "wait and see."

OFFICER BALDWIN
"Wait and see," over.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE MONTANA HOUSE - A MINUTE LATER

Pearl stumbles off the motorcycle.

Randy reaches over and, a bit roughly, pulls off her helmet.

Pearl can barely stand, staggering as she turns 360 degrees.

PEARL
What the fuck? What the fuck?

RANDY
You said, fuck no, you screamed:
"take me home! Take me home!" I
thought you'd have a fucking
stroke.

Pearl can barely stand.

PEARL
Is this home?

RANDY
It's your stupid fucking home.

INT. INSIDE THE MONTANA LIVINGROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Shirly, Frank and Kerry are still watching from the front window.

SHIRLY
I'm going out there.

FRANK
No, you're not.

KERRY
Shirly, the police are watching
right now. Officer Baldwin just
phoned, remember? Now, you stay
put.

SHIRLY
Oh, God, I hate seeing her like
this. She's in trouble, real
trouble.

EXT. FRONT OF THE MONTANA HOME

Shirly hurries out to Pearl.

She stops next to Pearl, and takes her by her forearm in an effort to steady her.

Pearl is very inebriated and barely notices Shirly.

Then Shirly screams at Randy.

SHIRLY

(To Randy)

You filthy young man; you leave
Pearl the Hell alone!

RANDY

(To Pearl)

Who the fuck are you?

PEARL

Oh, it's my. It's my. It's my
Grandma or something.

RANDY

You tell "grandma or something" to
fuck off!

Shirly steps away from Pearl and right up in Randy's face.

SHIRLY

Look, you little coward. You stay
away. Pearl's a good girl!

RANDY

Not no more, she ain't. Pearl, you
better get this bitch out of my
face. And I mean now!

PEARL

Oh, fuck, in your face? I mean,
face? Do you mean . . . whose face?

SHIRLY

What the Hell kind of drug did you
give her? You bastard!

Frank and Kerry are outside now, and Kerry takes Pearl's hand to steady her. Then Frank takes the other hand.

KERRY

Shirly, step back. This could get
out of hand.

RANDY

Oh, isn't this sweet. The whole fuckin' family is here to save this little Pearl bitch. Well, guess what? Her snatch smelled sweet.

KERRY

(To Randy)

What the Hell did you just say?

FRANK

My God, did you say . . .

RANDY

. . . Snatch! Snatch! Snatch! A little too much hair, but it smelled like love.

Shirly steps up close, with her face next to Randy's, and spits in his face.

Randy lifts his fist high.

Officer Baldwin enters the scene.

OFFICER BALDWIN

Randy, you calm down right now.

RANDY

Oh, it's my favorite bitch, Officer Baldwin ass wipe.

Randy's fist is still high.

RANDY (CONT'D)

(To Shirly)

You fuckin' cunt. Nobody spits in my face.

He punches Shirly in the face.

Shirly falls back to the ground, out cold.

Officer Baldwin pulls her pistol and puts it to Randy's head.

OFFICER BALDWIN

Off the bike, Randy. Now! You just bought yourself fifteen to twenty. You did it right in front of a cop, dumb ass.

FRANK

Christ, he's so high, he probably doesn't even know what he's done.

Officer Baldwin gets on her vest radio.

OFFICER BALDWIN
I need another squad car and an
ambulance at . . .

KERRY
Officer Baldwin, Pearl needs to go
as well . . .

OFFICER BALDWIN
. . . Make it two ambulances.

Randy slowly gets off his motorcycle.

RANDY
(To Pearl)
I'm comin' for you, bitch! You made
me punch out this old cunt.

OFFICER BALDWIN
You're under arrest for assault and
battery. On your knees with hands
on top of your head!

Randy drops to his knees and puts his hands on top of his
head.

RANDY
Pearl, you fuckin' cunt!

Officer Baldwin cuffs Randy's left wrist, pulls the hand down
to Randy's lower back, then pulls the other hand down and
cuffs the hands together.

RANDY (CONT'D)
The old bitch spit on me. Fucking
self defense!

OFFICER BALDWIN
Spit's not a fist. Stay on your
knees until my backup arrives.

Officer Baldwin keeps her pistol aimed at Randy.

Kerry falls to her knees to check Shirley.

KERRY
Frank, turn on your smartphone
light and hand it over.

Frank pulls out his smartphone, turns on the light and hands
it to Kerry, who starts checking Shirley.

Kerry checks the pulse in Shirley's neck and gently forces her eyelids open to check for dilation.

KERRY (CONT'D)
Her pulse is way too faint. She's
bleeding a lot from an eye socket.
Can somebody get me something to
slow this bleeding.

Just then the ambulance pulls up.

Right away, the paramedics go to work on Shirley.

Kerry tells the paramedics about Shirley's condition.

KERRY (CONT'D)
Pulse is dangerously faint. Head
injury, possible contusion. She's
eighty nine years old, guys. Hurry,
please.

The paramedics are a bit perplexed.

FRANK
(To the paramedics)
My wife's an MD.

Pearl, still too high to fully appreciate the levity of the situation, falls, butt first, to the ground. Then she crawls over to Shirley.

PEARL
(To Shirley)
Wake up, Shirley. Get up.

FRANK
Oh, Jesus! Pearl, Randy socked her
across the face. He had some juice
on the punch, too.

OFFICER BALDWIN
Randy's an ex-amateur boxer. Isn't
that right, Randy? Number eight in
the state?

RANDY
Sixth. And I hope she's funkling
dead.

Just then the backup squad car arrives with two officers, Jacobs and Washington, who hurry over to the scene.

OFFICER BALDWIN
(To Jacobs and Washington)
Can you take him to precinct, and
I'll write a full report later?
I'll have to follow the EMTs to the
ER.

OFFICER JACOBS
We got this.

The officers take Randy away.

RANDY
(On the way to the squad
car)
Oh, fuck, I really did punch out
the old bitch, didn't I?

Randy stops walking, sudden regret overwhelming him and
forcing the officers to stop walking.

RANDY (CONT'D)
Oh, fuck. Oh, fuck. I blew it. Wake
the old bitch up, please? Make the
bitch wake up.

KERRY
(Yelling at Randy)
She's eighty nine, you son of a
bitch. You can pick up your trophy
in prison.

RANDY
Well, what the fuck is she doing
out so late. Should be in a fucking
nursing home. This is Pearl's
fault. I'll get you, Pearl!

Officers Jacobs and Washington, holding Randy by his arms,
reach the squad car.

Officer Washington puts his hand on top of Randy's head and
forces him into the back seat.

PEARL
(Mumbling)
What happened?

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - 2:30 AM

Frank and Kerry are waiting in the emergency room.

ER Dr. Tanjin Aims (35), face red and eyes watery, approaches them.

KERRY

My God, Dr. Aims! Is Pearl okay?

DR. AIMS

Pearl's gonna be fine. Sorry, I'm having an emotional moment. We've just taken Pearl off an IV that helped her with dehydration.

KERRY

Is she coherent?

DR. AIMS

Much more so than when you brought her in.

FRANK

How about Shirley?

DR. AIMS

Well, then there's Shirley, whose case has moved us all. Poor thing. She's old.

KERRY

Got that.

DR. AIMS

She's had some micro strokes along with a brain contusion. Her vitals are unstable, she's now in ICU, and it doesn't look good, I'm afraid. She stabilizes for a while, then bottoms out. We've had to defibrillate her once already.

KERRY

Be clearer, please?

DR. AIMS

Well, you're an MD, so I'm sure you know that Shirley, at this point, this age, is minute by minute. Does she have relatives we should notify?

Dr. Aims takes a handkerchief from his pocket and wipes a few tears from his face.

FRANK

Not a soul. Just us. We're a lot like family. Next door neighbors, you know?

DR. AIMS

Of course. If she passes away from this injury, the young man who assaulted her will be facing murder charges. In fact, I've just notified Officer Baldwin of her condition, as per protocol. Shirley's still unconscious, so we're not sure how much damage she's sustained especially regarding brain function.

KERRY

She has Dementia, doctor.

DR. AIMS

I know that from her records. I'm not sure, yet, how this injury will effect her dementia. We'll see.

Dr. Aims turns around suddenly and sheds a few more tears.

FRANK

Dr. Aims, are you okay?

DR. AIMS

Forgive me, Dr. Montana, I did have "emotions" training during my residency, but we rarely see people this elderly with these kinds of injuries. They're nearly always brought in for heart and hypertension issues, digestive complaints, you know. This has caught us all by surprise. After all, we've all had grandmothers.

Frank takes a long sympathetic look at Kerry and puts an arm across her shoulders.

FRANK

Now they all do.

Frank and Shirley tear up and hug.

INT. THE MONTANA HOME KITCHEN - 5:30 AM

Kerry, Frank and Pearl are sitting in the kitchen discussing what's happened.

PEARL

Sorry just isn't powerful enough
for what I've done to Shirley and to
you guys.

KERRY

Well, frankly, I'm glad you're
sorry, honey. Don't be too hard on
yourself, though. You are, after
all, still a child.

PEARL

A screwed up woman-child.

FRANK

A woman in body but not quite yet
in mind?

PEARL

Why did the universe make us like
this?

FRANK

Because the universe can't control
octillions of nose bleeds every
micro second. In other words, it's
not paying attention to its own
health. Pearl, my dear, do you
remember, yet, what happened last
night?

PEARL

All I remember is taking a few sips
from a beer that Randy gave me.

KERRY

You had no idea there was Rohypnol
in that beer?

PEARL

What's that?

KERRY

Dr. Aims told us Randy gave you the
date rape drug, Rohypnol, also
known as roche, roofies, or
ruffles.

PEARL

Oh, God, did Randy rape me.

KERRY

ER checked. You're still a virgin.

FRANK

And Pearl, can we keep it that way for a while?

PEARL

How's daddy? How's daddy?

KERRY

It's too early to know much of anything. Greta doesn't expect a response for while. It's experimental, right? So we're flying through the dark, Pearl.

PEARL

Please don't tell daddy about this.

FRANK

Hell, no. Not right now anyway. An emotional jolt like this could take him. Pearl, you're a darling, and we love you already, but you need to take in the magnitude of what's going on.

KERRY

Okay, Frank. Okay, I think we can ease up a little for right now. I mean, let's just concentrate on getting Pearl and, well, all of us sorted out. I mean, it's safe to say that we're all in shock.

PEARL

Do you guys think daddy's cancer is just a nose bleed?

FRANK

The universe takes no responsibility. It just does what it does.

PEARL

It's all my fault. I could lose Shirley.

FRANK

. . . Shirley, bless her, knew better than to get into that asshole's face. It looked like she was consciously giving it all up for you, Pearl. She loves you so much.

Pearl starts to cry.

Kerry looks at her smart phone.

KERRY

The ER sent a text. Shirley's the same. We should try to get some sleep.

FRANK

Pearl, my dear, you have real feelings. You're nothing like that punk, Randy. Always know your worth. Wear it around your neck.

PEARL

I'm just trying to find some worth to know.

KERRY

Get some rest, Pearl. We're going to see your father later.

Pearl gets up and starts to head up the stairs, but she stops and looks back at Frank and Kerry.

PEARL

Can you imagine what would've happened if I died from that drug?

KERRY

You would've lost yourself. We'd have lost you and, of course, your father would've quickly followed you.

FRANK

Consequences.

Pearl walks back to the table, sits, puts her head on her arms and sobs.

PEARL

I'm so lucky to have you guys.

Frank and Kerry get up from their chairs and hug Pearl.

KERRY
Frank and I are here for you.

PEARL
Can I say, "I love you?"

FRANK
Say it twice, honey. We love you,
too.

INT. KERRY AND FRANK'S BEDROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Kerry and Frank are in bed trying to get some rest, but they can't sleep.

KERRY
Oh, hey, old man?

FRANK
Yes, old woman.

KERRY
Do I look old?

FRANK
Do I look old? Maybe we should stop
doing this "old" crap and get on
with it. Okay?

KERRY
I got a text from Greta.

FRANK
About Douglas?

KERRY
About all four of us.

Frank sits up in bed.

FRANK
Crack the mystery, please?

KERRY
I asked Greta to check Douglas's
and Pearl's DNA for a match.

FRANK
Why didn't you tell me you were
doing that?

Kerry, concerned, just gazes at Frank.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Out with it, lady!

KERRY
Perfect match. They're ours.

Frank lies back down with a big smile.

FRANK
I knew that. Why else would Douglas look like my young doppelganger.

KERRY
I think you delude yourself a little. He's much lighter skinned than you, dear. His eyes are lighter, and he has a much sharper nose.

They both lie in bed with big smiles.

FRANK
No way I'm gonna sleep.

KERRY
Me neither. Should I tell Pearl?

FRANK
Your call.

Frank gets a little serious.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Douglas said I was intimidating, and that's one reason he didn't want to approach me all those years.

KERRY
It's as though you carry a closed door. Someone comes around, and you put that door between you and the other person.

FRANK
Well, I hope it's an oak door. I like oak doors.

KERRY
You know what I mean.

FRANK

I'm pretty full of myself. I like being known in my field, and I wear it like a suite.

KERRY

More like armor.

FRANK

I like the door better. It's more, well. It's more Berkeley.

KERRY

You're so full of shit.

They both chuckle.

EXT. OUTDOOR FLOWER MARKET IN PALO ALTO - LATE AFTERNOON

Pearl, Frank, and Kerry are browsing at the flower shop.

FRANK

Why are we getting flowers? No flowers in isolation, remember?

KERRY

They said we could put them on the table just below the hall window.

FRANK

He's not even awake.

PEARL

Grandpa. I think grandma's doing this for me.

KERRY

For me, too, honey. Frank, for you, too.

FRANK

Sorry, I just keep thinking that flowers are for funerals.

PEARL

They're for every occasion, grandpa: weddings, new-born babies. They add beauty.

KERRY

Frank never remembers what beauty is unless he's looking at old bones and fossils.

FRANK

Damn, woman, you couldn't even remember that you were pregnant.

KERRY

And you couldn't remember that you were having an affair at that time, and that was the biggest reason it wasn't time for us to raise a child.

Frank is stunned.

FRANK

My God, of all the places to bring that in. After all these years, you put this on me at a Palo Alto fucking flower shop?

PEARL

What would be a better place, grandpa?

FRANK

I'm not gonna deny it. She was a grad student, and it was a two-week thing. I can't even remember what she looked like.

KERRY

This problem is a lot bigger than "what she looked like."

Franks looks at Pearl with confusion.

Pearl shows some anger.

PEARL

Okay, then. It's settled. Grandma and grandpa are both pieces of shit.

Kerry and Frank are taken aback. Then they start laughing.

Pearl lightens up and takes a bouquet of chrysanthemums from a bucket.

PEARL (CONT'D)

Let's go see my daddy. Let's go see your son.

Impressed with Pearl's hutzpah, Frank and Kerry feel pride in her.

FRANK

(To Kerry)

How about that. Both grandparents
are pieces of shit.

KERRY

Oh, she's right. She's right. Let's
get our piece-of-shit asses to the
hospital.

PEARL

Okay, time out on that stuff. Let's
go! But first can we pay for these
chrysanthemums?

Kerry hands Pearl a charge card.

Pearl is taken aback.

PEARL (CONT'D)

You're letting me use your card?

KERRY

Do you know how?

Pearl smiles and heads to the cash register.

INT. GRETA'S OFFICE AT STANFORD MEDICAL CENTER - THIRTY
MINUTES LATER

Pearl, Kerry and Frank are sitting at a small table facing
Greta.

PEARL

What's wrong with his heart?

GRETA

Ya know, Pearl, a better question
would be: what's wrong with every
muscle and organ in his body. He's
had a disproportionate number of
chemo treatments in the last two
years. We got him on so many damn
fluids right now, just trying to
keep his liver and kidney functions
up. To be honest, we expected heart
issues at the beginning of this
treatment. And, well, we did have
asystole twice, during which the
heart actually stops, but we were
ready for that and dealt with it.

FRANK

Is that gonna happen, again?

GRETA

It could--along with organ failures, for which we're also as ready as we can possibly be.

PEARL

So, my daddy's gonna die, right?

KERRY

I know it looks bad, Pearl. Just remember, Greta has some of the most qualified and committed people in the country working on this.

GRETA

People think this is all magic. It's far from it. We're dealing with countless variables, all of which we're monitoring 24/7. Yes, Douglas is human. His body could decide to fail completely, but we don't think that will happen, dear.

PEARL

I am grateful, and I am aware of all the trouble you're going through. It's just. It's just a lot to take in.

Pearl starts to cry.

Frank and Kerry put their arms around her.

GRETA

I'll have you know, he did wake up for a few minutes last night. The nurse said he smiled. But he hasn't awakened since. His body is going through so many remarkable changes right now, but they all make him more tired than you and I can possibly imagine.

INT. AT THE WINDOW TO DOUGLAS'S INSOLATION ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Frank, Pearl, and Kerry are standing outside of the window.

A nurse, wearing an isolation suit, is sitting on a chair next to Douglas's bed.

The nurse stands and angles Douglas's face so the family has a clearer view of his face.

As his face comes into full view, he opens his eyes.

NURSE

Talk if you want. He can hear you through the intercom.

PEARL

Daddy? Daddy?

KERRY

Look, he opened his eyes!

FRANK

He really does have my eyes. Holy shit!

KERRY

They're lighter than yours, Frank.

Greta enters the scene.

GRETA

I got a call from the nurses station. They saw him "wake up" on the monitor.

FRANK

His color is better, right?

GRETA

This is a good sign. But it's no guarantee, guys. We've got a while to go. There are signs that the treatment is working. But that doesn't necessarily mean it'll keep working.

Just then, Douglas smiles.

PEARL

Oh, my God, he's smiling.

Then Douglas winks at Pearl.

PEARL (CONT'D)

I love you, Daddy. I love you!

Douglas falls back to sleep.

GRETA

Pearl, it took all the energy he had just to open his eyes. My, your father sure loves you!

PEARL

I love him more.

INT. THE MONTANA KITCHEN - THREE DAYS LATER - BREAKFAST

Pearl and Kerry are eating breakfast.

KERRY

I know you're going through a lot right now, but you need to get back to class. Because you're normally such a serious student, your teachers been very patient with you these past few weeks.

PEARL

I already know the material for the next exams. I'll ace them all, I'm pretty sure.

KERRY

That's not the point. The point is to get you distracted.

Kerry looks at her smart phone.

KERRY (CONT'D)

(Reading a text out loud)

Shirly finally woke up. They say she's really weak but wants to see you, honey. Even though you're not "family," they're going to make an exception for you.

PEARL

Connections help, right? I'll see Shirly, then I'll head to school. Okay?

KERRY

Let's go.

INT. HOSPITAL INTENSIVE CARE CORRIDOR OUTSIDE OF SHIRLY'S ROOM

Pearl is opening Shirly's room door.

KERRY

I'll be here in the hall. Don't stay too long. She's weak.

INT. SHIRLY'S ROOM IN THE ICU - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Shirly's bed is set at a low incline, and she's hooked up to a heart monitor and IVs.

She gives Pearl a weak smile.

Pearl steps up against the side of Shirly's bed, takes Shirly's hand, leans over and kisses it.

SHIRLY

I'm so happy you came, dear Pearl.

PEARL

Thinking cap's on today, I see.

SHIRLY

It's a happy thinking cap.

PEARL

I'm done with Randy. Since he committed the assault against a senior citizen, the Judge at the arraignment demanded a two million dollar bail, so he's not ever gonna get out.

SHIRLY

I'm so sorry you had to go through that.

PEARL

I let you down, Shirly.

SHIRLY

Oh, nonsense! How's your daddy?

PEARL

It's hard to tell, but I think he's regaining strength.

SHIRLY

You know something, Pearl? I know you're daddy's gonna be okay. I just know it. You and your father will have long lives together. You look after him and your grandparents. They love you so much.

PEARL
I'm trying not to hope too much.

SHIRLY
It's okay to hope, honey. When the worst happens to us, the pain comes regardless of whether or not we're hoping.

PEARL
How did I get lucky enough to have you, Shirley?

SHIRLY
There's a reason for everything, dear. You know, my Arnie is waiting for me.

Shirly tightens her grip on Pearl's hand.

SHIRLY (CONT'D)
He would've loved you so much, Pearl.

PEARL
And I would've loved him as much as I love you.

Shirly becomes much weaker, suddenly.

SHIRLY
Love is wonderful. Oh, Arnie's calling me now, dear. I love you. .
.

Shirly's eyes close.

PEARL
Shirly? Shirley? Shirley? No, Shirley.
No!

Shirly lets go of Pearl's hand.

Shirly stops breathing, and the heart monitor flatlines.

INT. IN THE HALLWAY

Pearl, in the corridor, calls out as Kerry hurries to her side.

PEARL
Somebody! Help! Help!

Several medical staff come running toward the room.

INT. IN SHIRLY'S ROOM

DOCTOR AIMS
Her vitals have all flattened out.
She's in asystole.

Pearl looks on.

Kerry is holding Pearl's hand.

The doctor scratches his head.

DOCTOR AIMS (CONT'D)
Damn, she's eighty nine. Okay, I'm
going to try epinephrine. If that
doesn't bring her back, I'm going
to let her go.

The doctor administers the epinephrine through the IV.

The doctor looks at Kerry and Pearl.

DOCTOR AIMS (CONT'D)
There's absolutely no response. I'm
afraid I'm going to have to call
this.

PEARL
There's no way you're gonna get her
back from Arnie. No way. Arnie has
her now.

Kerry gives a crying Pearl a hug, then pulls away and
addresses the Dr. Aims.

KERRY
This isn't our call, doctor. We're
not family. But we do agree. Let
her fly.

Dr. Aims looks at Kerry and Pearl with serene sympathy.

DOCTOR
She's already flying.

Kerry and Pearl hug.

INT. INSIDE KERRY'S CAR - ABOUT AN HOUR LATER

Kerry drives as she and Pearl talk.

KERRY

Don't worry. Since there were no relatives, I'll make sure everything for Shirley goes smoothly. We'll keep her ashes until we decide where to put them.

Kerry's Bluetooth phone rings from the dash board.

KERRY (CONT'D)

Hi Greta.

GRETA (O.S.)

(Positive tone)

Are you sitting down?

KERRY

We're in the car.

GRETA (O.S.)

We have near remission, Kerry. The treatment has taken hold. And we're all elated and are thinking of more positive prospects.

KERRY

So Douglas is going to make it?

GRETA (O.S.)

We're very optimistic, my friend.

Pearl smiles.

PEARL

(Whispering)

Shirly?

KERRY

We'll drive out to Palo Alto now. We've just lost a dear friend of ours. You met Shirley a few times at the house.

GRETA (O.S.)

Ah, the sweet neighbor who was recently assaulted? Well, I would say come here later, then, but Douglas is up and is enjoying his first real food in a while.

PEARL

We're on our way now.

KERRY

Be there in about fifty minutes.

INT. AT STANFORD MEDICAL CENTER - OUTSIDE OF DOUGLAS'S
INSOLATION WINDOW

Pearl, Kerry, and Greta are standing outside.

Pearl has her nose pressed into the window as she keeps waving at Douglas, who is fully awake and is looking much healthier.

Frank enters the scene and goes to the window alongside Pearl.

FRANK

Got here as soon as I could. How's he doing?

PEARL

He looks great. Why does he have to stay in there?

GRETA

We need to make sure. His own immune system has reactivated and is running the ship now. We just don't want to take any chances. Just so you know, he is improving by the minute. Something in the treatment took hold, and we'll know in a few weeks how that happened.

PEARL

So, I get to have him for a few more years?

GRETA

You listen here, girl, we're goin' for the whole thing, a normal life span. Not to say there won't be snags along the way. But, hey, we think he could live long enough to see you with crows feet and a saggy neck.

PEARL

When can he come home?

GRETA

Now, part of the reason we were issued this multi million dollar grant to treat your father was so we could observe him in this facility for a few weeks after remission. We have to do a complete cause/effect analysis and include that in our report to the granting organization. Not to mention the years of occasional follow-up checks.

KERRY

And I'm so happy you get to do a remission report instead of the other.

GRETA

No shit.

Greta flips the intercom switch on the wall.

GRETA (CONT'D)

You can talk to him now.

PEARL

I love you, daddy!

DOUGLAS

I love you, Pearl!

Greta flips the switch, again.

GRETA

Sorry. One second. It's better to not tell him, yet, about Shirley. Okay. We can't take the chance of derailing this.

She flips the switch back.

DOUGLAS

Shirly's gone, isn't she?

The four of them glance suspiciously at one another.

KERRY

How, Douglas?

DOUGLAS

I think it was just before I woke up. Shirley told me, herself.

(MORE)

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

She sat at the foot of this bed and told me she was leaving to be with Arnie and her late husband. She said, "Take care of our Pearl?" When she left, it was as though she took all of my pain with her.

GRETA

I'm thankful for any assistance from Shirly, but forgive me if I don't include that in our reports to the granting organization.

PEARL

Shirly won't mind.

INT. THE MONTANA FOYER - THREE WEEKS LATER

Douglas, Frank, Kerry, and Pearl enter through the front door.

DOUGLAS

Ah, the smell of home.

FRANK

You can sleep here or in Shirly's house.

KERRY

We thought we'd wait to tell you until we got you two home. Shirly left her house to Pearl and a rather substantial amount of money. Shirly had a trust written up about two months ago. It's bullet proof.

FRANK

Pearl, in the trust, she talks about how much you helped her and without any complaints. Douglas, she thanked you for all the work you did around her house. She said you were the nicest nan in Berkeley.

DOUGLAS

We'll move into Shirly's house later if that's okay. For now, we'll stay with you, mum and dad.

END