

RITE OF FARE

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INT. BETH'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A spacious room with rustic wood furniture and down-home Americana decor. Light jazz music accompanies laughter and inaudible chatter. Six empty plates rest on the tabletop.

HARPER (70s), near alabaster skin, excellent posture and perfectly coiffed shoulder-length blond hair, wears a silk button-up and high-waisted slacks. Her left eye droops from Horner's Syndrome, and she wears a small custom brace that supports her mostly immobile left thumb.

Next to her sits MIA (70s), British and Black with a naturally textured, warm honey-brown pixie cut. She wears red lips and a fitted red dress that lands just below her knee. Her brown heels rest under her chair.

HARPER

They sent me this nurse--

MIA

(leans in)

You should have seen the way Harper drooled over the poor woman.

Mia gently stirs cream into her coffee with a slightly lifted pinky as she delicately crosses her legs.

HARPER

She could have been Sasquatch, and I wouldn't have known the difference.

MIA

She was stunning.

Harper attempts to open a jug of creamer by leveraging her four fingers on the heel of her brace, but it doesn't budge.

Mia delicately places her spoon onto a napkin, takes the jar from Harper, opens it, and hands it back to her.

Across the table from them sits RYLAND (49), Asian with a dad-bod. He wears jeans, a loud button-up and a nasal cannula attached to an air tank on wheels at his side.

Ryland flashes a blank piece of paper.

RYLAND

Which charge did you pick?

Harper pulls a hospital bill from her lap and studies it.

HARPER

Headache.

(beat)

She held me up on the pot as I sat there, playing her the deepest echoes of my shitless symphony.

Harper passes the creamer to BETH, (70s) mousy with a Dallas accent and slight build. She wears a blue checkered sweater, mom jeans and clean white tennis shoes. A cane with a bedazzled eagle head handle rests against her chair.

Beth takes the creamer and drowns her coffee with it.

BETH

Well, I hope you eventually found some relief.

HARPER

All bark, no bite--

Ryland glares at Beth's cane.

RYLAND

Why does your cane have eyes?

BETH

(glances at Ryland)

I'll only coddle your phobia with real birds.

ANN (60s), sickly thin, long silver hair, delicate floral cardigan, pearls, khakis, and pointed-toe flats. Her hand trembles as she touches the cane.

ANN

It's a very nice cane, Beth.

BETH

Why, thank you, Ann.

Ryland leans back and stares at another eagle statue on a stand across the room. He shudders.

RYLAND

The hospice isn't going to let you decorate, it is?

BETH

It's still pending Will's approval, but my eagles are coming with me.

RYLAND  
 (to Harper)  
 You said a headache?

ANN  
 Tension, migraine, sinus, cluster?

HARPER  
 Caffeine.

WILL (70s), a large man in flannel and jeans with white hair and a beard, enters with a tray of ice cream sundaes.

He gently places the tray on the table, then leans down and kisses Beth on the forehead.

BETH  
 Thank you, honey.

WILL  
 What're you guessin' now?

MIA  
 How much the hospital charged  
 Harper for a caffeine headache.

Harper takes a large bite of her burger and downs her water.

ANN  
 Oh, dear. You're going to make  
 yourself sick.

MIA  
 Her cut-off's in five minutes.

BETH  
 Don't you want whiskey?

HARPER  
 (chews her food)  
 Edible finally kicked in.

RYLAND  
 Let's place our bets.  
 (to Harper)  
 So you farted in front of your  
 pretty nurse? Big deal. I left a  
 trail of undigested peas when my  
 nurse escorted me down the hall for  
 my MRI last week.

HARPER  
 When I stood up, she noticed my  
 back was covered in TENS unit pads.

Ryland sprinkles tens, fives, and ones onto the table.

RYLAND  
I bet fifty bucks.

ANN  
I can do that.

Ann's hand trembles as she slowly places a single fifty-dollar bill in the middle of the table.

Beth SLAMS a one hundred dollar bill atop the other cash.

BETH  
See that...and I raise you  
buckaroos fifty more big ones.

WILL  
That's a big bet, hun.

RYLAND  
You don't scare me, Miss Americana.

Ryland tosses in another fifty dollars. Ann slowly follows.

ANN  
I suppose I do, too.

HARPER  
Write your guesses down.

Will drags a chair next to Mia and sits. She hands him an ice cream sundae from the tray and they dig in.

Ryland, Beth, and Ann write their guesses down on paper.

MIA  
(to Will)  
This is better than Jeopardy.

HARPER  
Ready?

One by one, they flash their guesses. Ann's says, "\$5.99," Beth's says, "\$40," and Ryland's says, "\$150."

WILL  
One-fifty?!

HARPER  
It was \$130.79.

Everyone moans. Ryland sprinkles the cash over his head.

BETH

(to Ryland)

You are the only person I know that  
can strut sittin' down.

(beat)

Harper...your damn story.

HARPER

When I stood up and faced the wall  
for her to remove the pads, I might  
have "posed" a little.

MIA

And that's when I walked in.

Beth and Ryland laugh. Will and Ann sit in silence.

ANN

What do you mean you posed?

MIA

She popped her ass out at the poor,  
unsuspecting nurse, who, by the  
way, was more mortified than me.

HARPER

Again, I wasn't in my right mind.

MIA

She had all male nurses for the  
rest of her stay.

ANN

Why haven't I gotten my wedding  
invite yet? I am invited, aren't I?

MIA

We're setting a date after  
tomorrow's biopsy.

HARPER

I've heard that before.

Beth launches into a coughing fit; she spits up blood. Will  
rushes to her side, rips her inhaler from the table and  
attempts to administer it.

WILL

Charlie! We need help!

CHARLIE (30s) tall, fit and clean-shaven, charges up to Beth.

CHARLIE

Just hold her up, Dad.

WILL

Take her. I'm not doin' it right.

Charlie holds Beth and administers her inhaler. He wipes her mouth clean with a napkin as her breathing stabilizes.

INT. HOSPITAL - PRE-SURGICAL HOLDING AREA - DAY

A perfect sunny day on a white sandy beach with palm trees and an azure ocean.

PATIENT 1 (V.O.)

Don't take me in yet. My husband is in the bathroom.

PATIENT 2 (V.O.)

Can I get more blankets over here? My mom is freezing.

Other PATIENTS CRY, VOMIT, and CALL OUT for a nurse.

The scene flaps with a breeze. It's an image printed on the privacy curtain at the foot of Harper's bed.

Harper stares at the ceiling with her fists clenched. Mia leans in and reaches for Harper's hand. Harper pulls away.

A NURSE (50s) rushes in and preps Harper's lines in a flurry.

NURSE

Are you ready, Ms. Carson?

MIA

Shall I come with her?

NURSE

I can see if--

HARPER

I'll be fine.

The nurse notices Harper's necklace.

NURSE

Oops! We're going to need you to take that off.

The nurse helps Harper remove the necklace and admires the image of a beautiful toddler on the gold pendant.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Beautiful child.

HARPER

Our son.

The nurse smiles as she hands the necklace to Mia.

NURSE

Let's get this over with so you can get back to your family.

The nurse and a MEDICAL TEAM roll Harper away.

Mia places the necklace around her neck, on top of hers. Harper's pendant faces the wrong direction and reveals the engraving on the back, "R.I.P. Carson."

INT. HOSPITAL - MIA'S ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

43 years ago. Young Mia wakes in a hospital bed. Young Harper holds their NEWBORN swaddled in a blue blanket.

YOUNG HARPER

Hi gorgeous. We missed you.

Young Mia smiles wide and sits up. Young Harper hands the newborn to Young Mia, and she feeds him.

Young Harper sits at Young Mia's side.

YOUNG MIA

Harper, how long was I out?

YOUNG HARPER

Long enough for me to fill in his name on the birth certificate.

Young Harper waves a document in the air.

YOUNG MIA

Stop.

Young Harper places the document on Young Mia's lap.

YOUNG HARPER

It is time to pick a name.

YOUNG MIA

Will you still be taking my last name when we get married?

YOUNG HARPER

That's the plan.

YOUNG MIA

Then, I think Carson would also  
make a handsome name for our son.

(beat)

Would you agree?

Young Harper smiles as she leans down and kisses Mia.

INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT

Tears roll down Harper's temples as she stares at the passing  
lights on the ceiling. The MEDICAL TEAM rolls her into...

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM - DAY

In a stark white room, a CT scanner with a steel bed and a  
flat-screen monitor hanging above it sits in the center.

The SURGEON and her ASSISTANTS organize the tools and table.

The medical team rolls Harper in and lines her gurney up to  
the CT bed. Each takes a corner of her sheet as they swiftly  
transfer her to the steel bed in one swift movement.

HARPER

I haven't been given anything for  
the pain.

NURSE

I'll talk to the surgeon. Just lie  
still for the CT scan.

The nurse shifts Harper's chin all the way to the right,  
fully exposing the left side of her neck.

Bright lights reveal the surgical scars on Harper's pale  
white skin. One scar runs from the left side of her neck,  
across her throat, and down the center of her chest.

The table BUZZES as it pulls her inside the CT scanner.

Harper's CT image appears on the screen above her.

The surgeon uses a tablet to circle a large mass on the scan.

SURGEON

It's completely encasing her  
carotid artery.

NURSE

Do you think we can get a sample  
with FNA?

SURGEON

Let's try it. We don't have time  
for local to kick in for the Core.

Harper emerges from the machine. Her eyes widen as she stares  
at the image on the screen.

HARPER

That's bigger than the one you just  
removed.

SURGEON

It's a bit more aggressive than we  
predicted.

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM - DAY

The medical team preps Harper's neck, cleaning and marking.

The surgeon plucks a large, thin needle from a metal tray.

SURGEON

I need to look up at the screen  
while I'm doing this because we're  
using the image to guide the needle  
to the tumor. If you move, we'll  
puncture your artery. Stay still.

HARPER

Why aren't you putting me to sleep?

SURGEON

We don't do that with fine-needle  
aspiration.

The surgeon inserts the needle into Harper's neck. She  
clutches the bedsheets.

HARPER

But I can feel that.

Harper squirms. The medical team holds her down.

SURGEON

Give her something.

NURSE

On it.

The nurse adds meds to Harper's line. The surgeon inserts the  
needle into Harper's neck, and she squeezes her eyes shut.

HARPER  
I still feel that.

INT. MIA'S CAR - NIGHT

Mia drives in the pouring rain. Harper stares out the window, distant. She places her necklace over her head.

MIA  
Darling--

HARPER  
Not now.

Mia glances over at Harper.

MIA  
We'll get a second opinion.

A heavy silence.

HARPER  
Saving the artery won't stop the cancer, and stopping the cancer won't save the artery.

MIA  
Dr. Green might have done more chemo and radiation.

HARPER  
I wouldn't have survived more. You know that.

MIA  
I'll call around tomorrow morning.

HARPER  
The hell you will.

MIA  
I realize it's a lot to process right now but--

HARPER  
Can you stop?!

Mia's chin quivers as she turns on the radio.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
We need to pick out our wedding dresses while I can still stand.

MIA  
We've got to focus on getting you better first.

HARPER  
I want you to have spousal rights.

MIA  
Stop it.  
(beat)  
Besides, the country club called. They're booked for the whole year.

HARPER  
When did they call?

MIA  
Yesterday.

HARPER  
Why didn't you tell me yesterday?

MIA  
Because we had more important things to focus on yesterday, incidentally, nothing's changed.

HARPER  
Ten years ago, I couldn't get you to stop gushing about our big proposal and wedding.

MIA  
Saving your life is a higher priority, wouldn't you say?

Mia places her hand on Harper's thigh. Harper moves away.

HARPER  
(scoffs)  
You're delusional.

Mia pulls into the driveway. Harper jumps out and slams the door. Mia sits alone, turns off the engine and cries.

INT. HOSPITAL - COMMUNITY ROOM - DAY

A bleak space that desperately tries to cheer itself up with a few faded Thomas Kinkadee prints. Two small tables with donuts, stale coffee, and cheap napkins flank the entryway.

A sign reads, "SO, YOU HAVE A TERMINAL ILLNESS, NOW WHAT?"

Harper quickly rushes in and pours herself a cup of coffee.

She turns to the five chairs in the room's center where Beth, Ryland, and OLIVIA (25), the prudent group facilitator with a calm demeanor and clipboard inaudibly chat until...

RYLAND  
 ...we're not dead yet.  
 (to Harper)  
 There's my little lemon squeeze!

They fire at Harper in rapid succession...

OLIVIA  
 Thank you for joining us.

RYLAND  
 Where were you?

BETH  
 Sugah, since when do you not call  
 when you're gonna be late?

Harper rushes to her seat.

HARPER  
 I--

BETH  
 Anyone who doesn't show without  
 callin' is presumed critical or  
 dead. You need to call from here on  
 out. Do you hear me?

HARPER  
 I'm sorry. My phone died, and I got  
 stuck in traffic.

Olivia reaches into her purse, fishes out a phone charger, and hands it to Harper. Harper plugs her phone into the wall.

OLIVIA  
 Beth, let's circle back to how  
 you're feeling right now.

Ryland scowls at Olivia.

RYLAND  
 Not today, Olivia.

OLIVIA  
 Are you having a bad day, Ryland?

Ryland sighs as he offers Olivia an impatient smile.

INT. RYLAND'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING - FLASHBACK

A subtly elegant breakfast nook. Floral, pastel and soft. Ryland drinks coffee at a small table and reads a paper.

SOFIA (40s), Mexican accent and long black hair with neutral makeup and an elegant floral dress, enters and places two plates of food on the table. She sits across from Ryland.

Ryland looks at his plate. His food has been cut into pieces.

RYLAND

Why the fuck is it all cut up?

SOFIA

It's sausage and eggs.

Ryland pushes his plate away.

RYLAND

I see that. Since when do I need you to cut my food up for me?

Sofia's eyes widen as she stops chewing.

SOFIA

(carefully)

Dr. Green mentioned that you're having a hard time swallowing--

RYLAND

But I didn't ask you to cut up my food. My hands work just fine.

Sofia pushes Ryland's plate back in front of him.

SOFIA

It's not a big deal.

RYLAND

I'm a grown-fucking-man, Sofia. I could lift this whole table and throw it across the room if I wanted to.

SOFIA

Honey, I'm just trying to help.

RYLAND

And I can still chew my food.

Sofia shrugs as she switches Ryland's plate with hers.

Ryland mutters to himself as he butters his toast. He plucks a jar of jam from the table and struggles to open it. The lid won't budge. His face turns red, and his hands shake.

SOFIA

Do you need--

RYLAND

No.

He continues to struggle with the jar.

SOFIA

We have to leave in fifteen minutes, and your air tank still needs to be changed out.

He tosses the jar at the wall. It shatters. He storms off.

RYLAND

I'll drive my-damn-self.

Sofia holds her breath as she gawks at the mess on the floor.

INT. HOSPITAL - COMMUNITY ROOM - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT

Ryland scowls at Olivia.

RYLAND

What's a good day these days?

OLIVIA

That doesn't answer my question.

RYLAND

(holds up coffee)

The coffee tastes slightly less like paint thinner today.

(big fake smile)

Everything's swell.

Beth glances at her watch. Olivia pens a note.

OLIVIA

(to Harper)

We're really glad you made it.

HARPER

I'm sorry that I was late.

RYLAND

We've been waiting for Ann, too.

HARPER

Huh. Did you try James and Dale?

BETH

Of course we did, honey.

OLIVIA

And now you know why we're a little worked up. I think we should all just take a deep breath and--

RYLAND

For God's sake! We're not in the mood to be facilitated right now, Olivia.

Olivia pulls her shoulders back and crosses her legs.

BETH

(leans in)

Ryland, tuck your tongue behind your teeth and apologize to the child.

OLIVIA

Thank you, Beth.

BETH

I didn't say you didn't deserve it.

Olivia purses her lips and glares at her clipboard.

OLIVIA

While we wait for Ann, we should talk about your weekly dinners.

(beat)

Harper, you're hosting next?

HARPER

I am. And I'm considering renting a house on the lake for dinner this weekend.

OLIVIA

Are we all good with that, group?

Ryland and Beth nod their heads, glancing at their watches.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Great. Hopefully, Ann will be, too. Beth, the last dinner was at your house. Is that correct?

A door SLAMS in another part of the building. They stare at their door. Nothing.

BETH  
Correct.

OLIVIA  
So? How'd it go?

Beth, Ryland, and Harper offer each other a knowing glance.

BETH  
We played games and had a good ol' time if I can say so myself.

Beth nervously shakes her leg as she stares at the clock above Olivia's head. Olivia leans in.

OLIVIA  
Do you feel like the weekly dinners are decreasing your anxiety?

BETH  
Oh, for heaven's sake. I don't know. Ask me after Ann gets here.

OLIVIA  
Okay.

Olivia flips through the pages on her clipboard and writes.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
Harper, have you been letting Mia help you more?

Harper glances at Beth's shaking leg and grabs onto her hand. Beth's leg steadies as Harper looks at Olivia.

INT. HARPER'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Floor-to-ceiling windows highlight a view of the LA skyline. A lone clock on a modern nightstand reads 3:17 am.

Harper's eyes pop open, and she hurls herself into the ensuite bathroom. Mia jerks awake and sits up. Harper RETCHES.

MIA  
Harp?!

Mia steps up to the bathroom door and cracks it open.

HARPER (O.S.)  
Get out!

Mia quickly pulls the door shut, marches back to the bed, and cries as Harper VOMITS.

INT. HOSPITAL - COMMUNITY ROOM - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT

HARPER

I'd say so.

Ryland rolls his eyes and scoffs.

OLIVIA

Good. Now that you've had time to consider the issue, why do you think it's been so hard for you to accept her help?

HARPER

I'm not just used to anyone helping me. Besides, she always thinks she's right about everything.

OLIVIA

Have you let her know how you feel?

HARPER

Yeah. She told me I was wrong.

RYLAND

This shit's hard enough without our partners constantly demeaning us.

(beat)

I'm moving into the guest house tonight.

HARPER

Why would you do that to Sofia?

RYLAND

You would if you had one.

OLIVIA

(to Ryland)

I'd like to unpack that with you one-on-one. But for now, let's focus on Ryland speaking only for Ryland.

RYLAND

There's nothing to talk about.

Olivia flips through the papers on her clipboard.

OLIVIA  
Can you do Tuesday at one o'clock?

Ryland nods, and he slumps in his chair. Olivia retrieves a small smooth rock from her purse and holds it up for Ryland.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
Do me a favor? I need you to keep this in your pocket at all times until I ask for it back.

RYLAND  
Why would I--

OLIVIA  
Trust me.

Ryland plucks the rock from Olivia's hand, inspects it, and reluctantly places it in his front pocket.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
Beth?

BETH  
Yeah?

OLIVIA  
How about you? How are things between you and Will?

Beth bites her bottom lip and stares back at Olivia.

INT. BETH'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Will and Beth sleep soundly under a patchwork quilt. Beth WHEEZES and GAGS. Will bolts up and lifts her chin.

WILL  
Beth! Breathe for me now.

Beth INHALES.

WILL (CONT'D)  
There you go, hun. Good girl.

BETH  
Will?

WILL  
I'm right here. You're okay.

Beth blinks a few times and stares at the ceiling as the hallway light turns on.

CHARLIE (O.S.)  
Is everything okay?

Will slides out of bed and tip-toes into the hall.

Beth watches Will and Charlie from the bed.

WILL (O.S.)  
Yeah, we just had a little scare.  
(cries)  
If I don't get sleep soon, I'm--

Beth weeps silently.

CHARLIE (O.S.)  
Go to my room for the rest of the  
night. I'll keep an eye on her.

Beth quickly wipes her eyes. Charlie sneaks in and rests in a recliner near her side of the bed.

BETH  
It's time to let me go to hospice.

CHARLIE  
I can ask them to cut my shifts at  
the hospital. Let me take care of  
you, Mom.

BETH  
Don't you dare. You still owe me a  
daughter-in-law and grandbabies.

INT. HOSPITAL - COMMUNITY ROOM - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT

Beth tears up in a moment of unabashed honesty.

BETH  
It's takin' a toll on all of us.

Olivia leans in a little.

OLIVIA  
Let's explore that.

Beth immediately withdraws.

BETH  
Never mind. Everything's hunky-  
dory. The boys are fine. I'm fine.  
We're fine.

Olivia deflates and offers her a tight smile.

OLIVIA  
That's great to hear.

Harper's phone resurrects with several consecutive DINGS.  
Everyone stares as she checks her messages.

HARPER  
Nothing from Ann.  
(beat)  
Beth...sending eight messages in a  
row doesn't accomplish anything.

Harper sets her phone down.

BETH  
You're just lucky I didn't call  
911. I still might.

RYLAND  
Who else can we call to get ahold  
of her?

HARPER  
She lives right around the corner  
from here.

RYLAND  
Then let's take a walk, ladies.

BETH  
I don't think I can walk that far.

OLIVIA  
I can't leave. So, Beth, we can--

BETH  
Second thought, I sure could use  
some fresh air.

Harper, Beth, and Ryland stand. Harper helps Beth hobble  
across the room as Ryland rolls his air tank toward the door.

HARPER  
Her son, Dale, just got married. I  
bet she's exhausted--

HOSPITAL - HALLWAY

Ryland pushes the door open and holds it for Harper and Beth.  
He spots DALE (40s), tall and thin with red, puffy eyes. He  
waits on a bench and glances up at Ryland.

RYLAND

Dale?

Dale stares at Ryland.

RYLAND (CONT'D)

Fucking hell.

HOSPITAL - COMMUNITY ROOM

Ryland holds the door open as Dale lumbers in. Harper and Beth freeze, still in the middle of the room.

BETH

Hey there, son! Where's your mama?

RYLAND

Beth...where do you think?

DALE

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt your meeting.

HARPER

Oh, no.

DALE

She passed last night.

BETH

(with a gasp)

I knew something wasn't right.

HARPER

Common, let's turn back to the chairs.

BETH

(wobbles)

I need to sit!

HARPER

Whoa! We need a chair!

Olivia delivers a chair moments before Beth's legs give way. They bring the remaining chairs over. Everyone sits.

BETH

She was a fine woman.

HARPER

Dale, how is your father doing?

DALE

Uh...he seems lost. All of us are.

OLIVIA

I'm very sorry for your loss, Dale.

RYLAND

How are you holding up?

Beth hands Dale a tissue and then passes the box around.

DALE

All the doctors kept telling us that it was going to happen, but every day she just kept on living...and I don't know...I guess we stopped believing them.

Dale blows his nose and takes a deep sigh.

DALE (CONT'D)

And my dad feels incredibly guilty.

BETH

He's been so supportive.

DALE

He woke up, and she was cold. He slept right through it.

Everyone leans back; no one breathes. Dale stands and shoves the pile of tissues into his pocket.

DALE (CONT'D)

Sorry, I--

HARPER

Oh, it's okay. Please stay a while.

DALE

I've got to go. All of you were very special to my mom. I know she would have wanted me to tell you in person, but I need to get home.

Beth reaches out and pulls Dale in for a hug.

BETH

(wipes her wet cheeks)

I'll ask Will and Charlie to reach out to you and your dad if that's all right.

DALE  
Of course, thank you.

Dale lumbers toward the door, then turns on his heel.

DALE (CONT'D)  
She wanted her ashes spread in  
Ireland, so we're not going to have  
a funeral. I'm sorry.

Dale pushes the door open and doesn't look back.

Silence. They stare at Ann's empty chair. Beth wails.

RYLAND  
That was unexpected.

OLIVIA  
Ryland, she was dying.

HARPER  
Olivia.

INT. HARPER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Harper enters a modern living room and charges up the stairs.  
Mia sits on the couch with her laptop and glances at Harper.

MIA  
I heard about Ann.

Harper stops.

HARPER  
Yeah.

MIA  
Can we chat?

HARPER  
I'm tired.

MIA  
Shouldn't we, though?

Harper looks up the stairs and takes a deep breath. She turns  
and slowly descends.

MIA (CONT'D)  
I'm taking her death as a sign.

Harper plops down on the couch next to Mia.

HARPER

It's not a sign, for God's sake.

MIA

Can't you just for once...listen?

(huffs)

Call it whatever you want. I've spoken to some doctors who are optimistic and more than willing to do radiation immediately.

Harper leans in and places her hand on Mia's.

HARPER

I'm done talking about this.

Harper stands and kisses Mia's forehead.

MIA

Don't you dare...not now.

HARPER

Do you know how much my last surgery cost?

MIA

Sorry?

Harper sits, grabs the laptop from Mia, types for several seconds, and places it back on her lap.

HARPER

If we were married, you'd know removing the last tumor cost \$486,390.60. I paid \$8,158.18 of that...only because my insurance thought it'd give me a chance.

Mia opens her mouth to object--

HARPER (CONT'D)

But my insurance company won't pay for this.

MIA

Both of us have savings and--

HARPER

And do you know why they won't pay for it? Because I am going to die!

MIA

Doctors are wrong all the time. We can't simply give up because it's a challenge. We've beaten it thus far.

HARPER

I saw it with my own eyes. More than that, I feel it. It's in my body...and it's killing me. I've accepted that.

(beat)

The best thing you can do for me is accept it, too.

MIA

So we give up, then?

Harper tosses the laptop aside and takes Mia's hands in hers.

HARPER

I want to marry you, and I want to enjoy the time that we have left.

MIA

The old Harper would have never given up. Ever. I need her back. We both do.

Harper sinks into the couch. The DOORBELL rings.

MIA (CONT'D)

Are you expecting a visitor?

HARPER

No.

MIA

I'm not, either.

The DOORBELL rings again.

HARPER

Could you please? I'm just...

Mia disappears into the foyer as Harper stares at the ceiling. Mia jogs in...

MIA

It looks like your sister.

HARPER

No.

MIA  
What would you like me to do?

HARPER'S HOUSE - FOYER

Harper peers through the peephole at VIVIAN (mid-70s), with an average build and brown hair, wearing dime-store frocks. She erratically paces the porch.

Harper backs away from the door and stares at Mia with her mouth open.

MIA  
(whispers)  
Shall I answer it?

A KNOCK on the door.

VIVIAN (O.S.)  
Come on! All the lights are on and  
your car's in the driveway!

HARPER  
(whispers)  
I'm not here.

Harper hides behind the door as Mia opens it.

VIVIAN  
Hi, Mia! God, I umm, it's good to  
see you!

Mia steps onto the porch and closes the door behind her.

EXT. HARPER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Vivian opens her arms and leans toward Mia.

Mia steps back and crosses her arms. Vivian's arms drop.

MIA  
How can I help you, Vivian?

VIVIAN  
I'd like to talk to Harper?

MIA  
I'm afraid she's not home.

VIVIAN  
That's a shame.

MIA  
I can give her a message.

INT. HARPER'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Harper digs her fingertips into the door as she watches the women through the peephole.

VIVIAN (V.O.)  
No, it's okay.

MIA (V.O.)  
All right then.

VIVIAN (V.O.)  
I mean...I guess...I just...  
(beat)  
I have brain cancer, Mia.  
(beat)  
Neuroblastoma.

Harper holds her hand up to her mouth and reaches for the doorknob but freezes.

EXT. HARPER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MIA  
I'm terribly sorry to hear that.

VIVIAN  
I wanna see my sister before...eh.

Mia studies Vivian as she nods gently.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)  
Anyway, I'm still at the same address. I'll give you my new number.  
(beat)  
Maybe you can give it to her?

MIA  
Of course.

Vivian rifles through her purse and pulls out an old receipt and eyeliner. She writes and hands it to Mia.

VIVIAN  
How's she holding up?

MIA  
She's...she's good.

Vivian gawks at the house.

INT. HARPER'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Harper watches the women and slides her hand toward the knob.

VIVIAN (V.O.)  
Looks like she's doing more than  
good.

Harper removes her hand from the doorknob.

MIA (V.O.)  
Right. I'd invite you in, but I was  
just heading off.

EXT. HARPER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

VIVIAN  
Oh. Yeah. Great. Well, I hope I  
hear from Harper.

Mia holds up Vivian's number.

MIA  
I'll give it to her.

Mia turns and reaches for the doorknob.

VIVIAN  
Wait.

INT. HARPER'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Harper leans into the peephole.

MIA (V.O.)  
Yes?

VIVIAN (V.O.)  
I know she's home.

Harper quickly jumps away from the door.

EXT. HARPER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mia shakes her head.

VIVIAN

I saw you two in the living room  
when I walked up to the house.  
Believe me. I thought long and hard  
before I burdened you with my--

MIA

Oh, Vivian. She was desperate for a  
kip, that's all.

VIVIAN

Jesus. It's been forty years.

MIA

(holds up number)  
I'll give her your number.

With a nod, Vivian turns and steps away.

EXT. YOUNG VIVIAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Forty years ago. Young Harper (early 30s) cautiously steps up  
to a rundown house covered in chipped paint and a stoop  
blanketed with cigarette butts.

Young Harper stares at the missing numbers hanging by the  
door as she KNOCKS. She GASPS and spins toward Young Mia  
(late 20s), who strolls up.

YOUNG HARPER

Mia, I forgot the wine!

YOUNG MIA

I have it here!

Young Mia holds up the bottle as she glares at the cigarette  
butts surrounding her feet.

YOUNG MIA (CONT'D)

I hope he's been a good boy.

YOUNG HARPER

I don't hear any crying.

Young Harper raises her fist to KNOCK; the door swings open.

A disheveled YOUNG VIVIAN (mid-30s) wears a robe and clutches  
a wad of cash. A MAN (50s), short and fat in a sweaty shirt  
with his underbelly hanging out, steps up to the doorway and  
lands a wet, sloppy kiss on her lips.

YOUNG HARPER (CONT'D)

Vivian.

Young Harper attempts to push past Young Vivian and the man. The man places his hand on Young Harper's waist and smiles.

YOUNG MIA  
Do you mind if we just go inside?

YOUNG VIVIAN  
One sec.

Young Harper and Young Mia glare at each other as Young Vivian counts the cash.

YOUNG VIVIAN (CONT'D)  
Hey! You're ten bucks short!

The man lights a cigarette and ogles the women.

MAN  
You sure?

Young Vivian smirks at him as he hands her a ten-dollar bill with a wink. The man studies the three women.

MAN (CONT'D)  
I'll make it worth your while if you let me stay.

YOUNG VIVIAN  
Oh, stop it!

Young Harper and Young Mia attempt to push past Young Vivian and the man. Young Vivian quickly pulls the door shut.

YOUNG HARPER  
Vivian, where is Carson?

YOUNG VIVIAN  
Don't be rude.  
(to the man)  
This is my sister, Harper, and her "friend," Mia! She owns the fancy art gallery next to the museum! You should go see her when you need more art for your house...or if you want to get me something special.

MAN  
I just might do that.

Young Harper's and Young Mia's knuckles turn white as they hold hands.

YOUNG VIVIAN  
 (to the man)  
 Same time next week?

MAN  
 You got it, babe.

With another wet kiss, he waddles away.

YOUNG VIVIAN  
 Relax. He's sleeping.

INT. HARPER'S BATHROOM - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT

Harper storms in and plops down on a stool. She removes the brace from her hand and tosses it onto the counter.

Taking a glob of lotion from a jar, she massages her hand.

HARPER  
 We shouldn't have opened the door.

Mia steps in and places Vivian's number on the counter.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
 Throw that away and wash your hands.

MIA  
 Stop it. She's right, you know. It has been forty years.

Mia quickly washes her hands.

HARPER  
 How dare she come to our home.

Mia scoops lotion from the jar and reaches for Harper's hand.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
 I'm fine.

Harper stands, but Mia pulls her back down and sits with her.

MIA  
 Relax.

Mia massages lotion into Harper's hand. Harper WINCES.

MIA (CONT'D)  
 Oh! Sorry.

HARPER  
 (to herself)  
 I'm not going to call her.

MIA  
 I'll stay out of it.

HARPER  
 Did you tell her to come over?

MIA  
 Listen to yourself.  
 (beat)  
 We need to go to the grocery store.

HARPER  
 How good of you to be so forgiving.  
 Christ-like, really. I didn't know  
 I was marrying a fucking saint.

MIA  
 Christ isn't a saint. And don't you  
 dare start with me. This isn't my  
 doing.

Mia massages Harper's forefinger, and she pulls away.

HARPER  
 Ouch.

MIA  
 I have you set up for acupuncture  
 on Mondays, Wednesdays, and  
 Fridays.  
 (beat)  
 Then, you have a new hand rehab  
 program on Tuesdays and Thursdays.  
 (beat)  
 We'll get this moving again soon.

HARPER  
 I'm not going to any of those  
 appointments.

Mia holds up Harper's damaged thumb and forefinger.

MIA  
 Fine...I'll cancel them.  
 (beat)  
 But you will speak to your sister.

Mia shoots up from her seat and storms out. Harper stands and places the brace back on her hand as she slams the door shut.

She tosses Vivian's number into the trash, splashes water on her face, and stares at herself in the mirror.

INT. GROCERY STORE - OLIVE AISLE - NIGHT

Harper meanders down the fluorescent walkway, leaning on her cart with her elbows resting on the handle. She stops and scans the rows of olive jars and cans.

Her left hand TREMORS as she grabs a jar with her fingers, supporting its weight with the heel of her hand, and places it in the cart.

Mia strolls up and places several more items into the cart. She grabs the jar of olives Harper selected and studies it.

MIA

You hate this brand.

Mia exchanges the jar of olives for a different brand.

HARPER

They all look the same.

MIA

We should get you home.

HARPER

Do we have everything?

MIA

Get in line. I'll meet you there.

Mia marches away before Harper can respond.

INT. GROCERY STORE - END OF AISLE - NIGHT

The checkout station in view, Harper approaches another cart blocking her exit. KIM (40s), a plastic busybody, bends with her back to Harper as she forages the soup section.

HARPER

Pardon. Your cart.

No response. Harper slowly shuffles up to the cart and pulls it out of her way. She returns to her cart. Kim turns...

KIM

Harper!

Kim stands, placing her hands on the end of Harper's cart.

KIM (CONT'D)

I didn't see you there!

Harper trembles as she attempts to swerve past her.

HARPER

Hi, Kim. Excuse me, I don't mean to be rude, but I'm not feeling well. I need to get to the register.

KIM

Oh, honey! Of course, let's go!

Still blocking Harper's path, Kim swings her cart around and leads the way.

INT. GROCERY STORE - REGISTER - NIGHT

Kim pushes her cart to the only open register in front of Harper but doesn't unpack her mounds of groceries.

KIM

You know...I was just thinking of you the other day.  
(leans forward)  
Jenny. You know her. She has a sister whose husband had cancer years ago. I need to tell you about the diet he followed--

The CASHIER (19) stares vapidly at her phone.

Harper fidgets with her hand brace as she fixates on the empty conveyor belt.

HARPER

(to the Cashier)  
Can you open another register?

CASHIER

Sorry. We're short tonight.

Kim slowly plops her items onto the conveyor belt, one at a time. Harper scans the store for Mia.

KIM

He cut out all dairy, sugar, gluten, and meat.

Another SHOPPER pulls up behind Harper with a packed cart.

Harper grips her cart handle as her gaze vies between Kim and the shopper; she's boxed in.

CASHIER

Oh no! What happened to your hand?

HARPER

(reluctant)

I had surgery.

KIM

A tumor in her neck.

CASHIER

I don't see how on Earth that's related to your hand.

Harper stares at the EXIT sign in the distance. The shopper shamelessly studies Harper's hand and eye.

SHOPPER

I work for a surgeon, and I'm telling you, your doctor should be sued! He fucked up.

(beat)

I'm so mad for you! Aren't you mad?

KIM

Her eye is bad, isn't it?

The women lean in and gawk at Harper's eye.

Harper shoves Kim's groceries toward the Cashier, tosses the divider down and unloads her groceries.

CASHIER

Grannie's eye drooped awfully bad like that too...after her stroke.

Harper frantically scans the area for Mia. She wobbles.

KIM

(to the Cashier)

Doesn't it make you want to get your whole body scanned?

(to Harper)

What's the scan called?

SHOPPER

(to Kim)

A PET scan.

Kim's groceries wait to be bagged and paid for.

KIM

Then again, they say that if the cancer doesn't kill you, the radiation from the machines will.

Harper sways, leaning on a magazine stand.

CASHIER

I definitely think I have a tumor somewhere in my body. I watch those medical shows all the time, and--

SHOPPER

(to the Cashier)

You'd have to get a referral.

KIM

Oh, a referral! Doctors make sure you're knocking on death's door before they refer you to anything these days.

Sweat rolls down the right side of Harper's face; her left side is dry and red (unilateral anhidrosis). She trembles.

CASHIER

(nods toward Harper)

She got a scan.

KIM

How did you get your body scan referral?

All three women stare at Harper in silence. Mia appears and plops two steaks down onto the conveyor belt.

HARPER

Could you please just pay for your fucking groceries?

MIA

Harper!

KIM

Excuse me?

Harper squeezes past Kim and stumbles toward the exit. She sways back and forth as her footsteps grow heavy.

MIA

Darling, are you okay?

Harper turns to Mia; tears stream down her face.

HARPER  
I'm sorry. I'll be in the car.

MIA  
What's happened?

CASHIER  
Oh, no! We didn't mean to--

KIM  
The poor thing has reached her  
limit. I think she needs--

Harper turns to Kim.

HARPER  
What do I need?! Tell me what I  
need!

Harper glares at the women. Her eyes flutter.

EVERYONE in the store freezes and stares at Harper. She turns  
and stumbles toward the exit, tripping and falling flat on  
her face. She wails.

Mia runs to Harper's side. They've drawn a CROWD.

MIA  
What are you people gawking at?!  
Mind your business!

INT. HARPER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A contemporary kitchen with ample counter space. Pasta boils  
on the stovetop. Mia stirs the pot, darts over to a grocery  
bag, and removes a few items, placing them on a shelf.

Harper rests, slumped over on a chair at the counter. A small  
mound of pills sits before her. Grabbing a few pills at a  
time, she shovels them into her mouth and washes each  
mouthful down with a glass of water.

HARPER  
I'm going to host the dinner at the  
lake this weekend.

MIA  
Why's that?

HARPER  
I want to mix it up a bit.

MIA

Do you really think that's a good idea?

Harper stands and lifts a bag of groceries. Mia rips it out of her hands and places it back on the counter.

MIA (CONT'D)

I've got it. Rest.

Harper sits and inspects a bottle of red wine on a shelf within reach.

HARPER

Wine?

Mia empties the final bag of groceries and plucks two wine glasses from a cupboard. She sets them in front of Harper.

MIA

That's the cheap stuff my brother sent us.

Harper pours herself a glass and screws the top shut.

MIA (CONT'D)

I still want a glass.

Harper slides her glass toward Mia and fills another. Mia sips it and purses her lips.

HARPER

The whole point is to celebrate the fact that we're still alive. It's not much of a celebration if we go to the same houses every month.

Harper brings her wine glass to her lips. Mia rips it out of her hand and pours it down the drain.

HARPER (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

MIA

Either my brother hates me, or I need to help him find a better job.

Mia pulls another bottle of wine from a shelf, opens it, and pours two new glasses.

HARPER

I'm sorry about tonight.

MIA  
Taste this.

HARPER  
God, that's amazing. We should  
serve this at the wedding.

MIA  
It's \$400 a bottle.

Mia stirs the pasta.

HARPER  
Well, perhaps we could serve a  
couple of bottles with the dinner  
this weekend.

MIA  
Absolutely. We can have a  
restaurant cater it here...and you  
can invite your sister.

HARPER  
I'm not asking for your permission.

MIA  
Beth's house is five minutes from  
the hospital, Ryland's is three,  
and ours is seven. The lake is over  
an hour away.

HARPER  
Ann's was less than a block. And  
yet, she's dead.

Mia serves each of them a bowl of pasta and sits next to  
Harper. Harper takes a sip of wine, plucks a wedding magazine  
from the countertop, stands and marches away.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
I'm going to take a bath.

INT. HOSPITAL - DR. GREEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Mia sits at a desk across from DR. GREEN (70s), a petite man  
with hair sprouting from everywhere but the top of his head.

The hospital's intercom system DINGS. Mia and Dr. Green stare  
at the dingy speaker in the ceiling; nothing happens.

DR. GREEN

I must say, I'm surprised Harper's having a hard time with this. Last we spoke, she was very accepting--

Another DING.

MIA

She had the surgery, chemo, and radiation...all exactly as planned.

DR. GREEN

And despite the prognosis, it was successful because we bought her a little more time.

MIA

But some days, it's as though she's not sick at all.

DR. GREEN

That's the good stuff. I wish I could be the bearer of better news, but her time is more valuable now than ever.

A DING, followed by an ANNOUNCEMENT.

INTERCOM (V.O.)

Code violet. I repeat. Code violet.

DR. SIMMONS (mid-50s) towering and clumsy, hastily enters without knocking. She towers over Mia.

DR. SIMMONS

A man is running down the hall naked as the day he was born and...

Dr. Simmons notices Mia.

DR. SIMMONS (CONT'D)

Oh. Pardon me. Hi Ms. Miller.

(beat)

Did you get my message?

Mia lowers her head.

MIA

Hi Dr. Simmons. I did. Thank you anyway.

DR. SIMMONS

Dr. Green brought Harper's case up to the board more times than I could count, and I'm afraid we've all reached the same conclusion...we can't do any more treatments.

Mia shifts in her seat.

DR. GREEN

(to Mia)

Look, I understand. Ask for a second...or fifteenth opinion. But I guarantee it won't be the first time they've heard Harper's case.

DR. SIMMONS

...I didn't mean to interrupt, but your patient jumped off his gurney and ran out of the operating room.

DR. GREEN

(to Dr. Simmons)

I don't blame him.

(to Mia)

It's high risk, almost no chance of reward. Diminishes the time he has left. But his wife kept pushing.

(to Dr. Simmons)

Send him home. Tell Mrs. Franks that I've denied the surgery.

DR. SIMMONS

Respectfully, sir, I'm afraid of Mrs. Franks.

DR. GREEN

Where is she?

DR. SIMMONS

Chasing after Mr. Franks.

Dr. Green studies Mia. The intercom DINGS.

INTERCOM VOICE (V.O.)

Code violet. I repeat. Code violet.

Dr. Green stands and strolls over to Mia.

DR. GREEN

Sorry, Mia. It looks like I need to go help--

MIA  
We're not finished here!

DR. GREEN  
(to Dr. Simmons)  
Give us a few minutes.  
(to Mia)  
What can I do for you?

Dr. Simmons slides out the door.

MIA  
I'm afraid Harper has given up.

DR. GREEN  
You just told me that she's still  
out and about.

MIA  
She is.

DR. GREEN  
Then what seems to be the problem?

MIA  
(cries)  
What I mean is...she's stopped  
fighting. She doesn't even want to  
do PT anymore.

Dr. Green pulls a box of tissues from a shelf, sits on the edge of his desk and offers Mia a tissue. She takes it and wipes her eyes.

DR. GREEN  
Sometimes, letting go is the  
bravest thing a person can do.  
(beat)  
What is she doing with her time?

MIA  
Planning the wedding and wants to  
host the dinner at the lake this  
weekend.

DR. GREEN  
That's more than most would do in  
her situation. It would be best if  
you were happy about that.

MIA  
(sobs)  
Happy? How can I be happy about  
anything right now?

DR. GREEN

She's finding things to look forward to. That's a best-case scenario here.

(beat)

But we should monitor her to ensure she can still go out alone. I advise getting her a watch that'll track her vitals and send out an alert to all of us if something happens.

Mia hunches over and bawls. Dr. Green places the entire box of tissues on her lap.

DR. GREEN (CONT'D)

Look, I went through the same thing nine years ago with my wife, and I know there's very little I can say that will make you feel better right now. But the faster you can accept the reality of Harper's situation, the easier it'll be for both of you to make the most of this time.

Mia blows her nose and wipes her eyes.

MIA

Are you sure you don't have a colleague that you can recommend... anyone at all?

Dr. Green removes a card from his wallet and hands it to Mia.

DR. GREEN

My personal cell is on that card. If you need help or even to talk, I'll be here.

Mia stands, and they embrace. He leads her to the door.

MIA

You've said she has days before.

DR. GREEN

But I've never told you we were out of options until now.

A DING, followed by an ANNOUNCEMENT.

INTERCOM (V.O.)

Code violet. I repeat. Code violet.

Mia cries as she exits. She turns back...

MIA  
One more thing. Harper's sister has neuroblastoma. Do you think you can help her?

DR. GREEN  
Are you sure?

MIA  
That's what she told me. Why?

INT. BAKERY - DAY

Harper looks at wedding cakes. An ATTENDANT checks in.

ATTENDANT  
Do you like that one?

HARPER  
Can you add another tier to it?

ATTENDANT  
Let me ask.

A MOTHER and DAUGHTER mosey over and stand next to Harper.

MOTHER  
Do you really want to marry a man from a family that can't get along?

DAUGHTER  
Mom, stop. He's a great guy.

MOTHER  
How great can he be if he can't even work things out with his own parents?

Harper browses a stack of wedding-themed mugs. She hones in on one that says, "SISTER OF THE BRIDE."

EXT. VIVIAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Harper KNOCKS on the door of a small, run-down house. After a couple of seconds, some SHADY GUYS stroll past her. She KNOCKS harder. The door cracks open.

HARPER  
Vivian?

VIVIAN

Harper?

A towel-clad Vivian opens the door wide and gives Harper an enthusiastic hug.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

This is...This is...

(beat)

Didn't Mia give you my number?

HARPER

Oh! Yeah. Right. Well, I was just in the neighborhood. I could go if it's not a good time.

VIVIAN

No, it's fine. I just have--

POLICE SIRENS BLARE. Vivian pulls Harper inside.

INT. VIVIAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

I small, dusty space with a worn couch and big screen TV. The walls are blanketed in photos.

VIVIAN

You look great!

(beat)

And that house of yours is stunning. You've always been so smart and talented.

HARPER

Thank you. Look, I'm sorry that I didn't call first. Truth is, I thought I'd lose my nerve and--

VIVIAN

Oh, don't worry about it. I take it Mia told you?

Vivian struts away, and Harper cautiously follows.

VIVIAN'S HOUSE - LAUNDRY ROOM

Vivian drops her towel; she's naked. Harper turns away.

HARPER

I'll give you some privacy.

VIVIAN  
Oh, it's fine.

Harper scans the disheveled and dirty room.

HARPER  
I'm sorry you're sick.

VIVIAN  
Yeah. Well. Me too.

HARPER  
I can't give you--

A man SINGS in the background.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
Oh! I'm sorry. Is someone in your shower?

Vivian plucks a dress from a laundry basket and pulls it on.

VIVIAN  
I don't think his wife would be very happy if he came home covered in oil.

Harper leans on a stack of towels.

HARPER  
You have a nursing degree.

VIVIAN  
Believe me, I'm using it.

Vivian bundles a towel on the floor, then squats and pees on it. Harper's jaw drops.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)  
I can't pee while he's in the shower. That'd be weird.

Harper quickly moves away from the stack of towels, discreetly pulls hand sanitizer from her purse, and wipes down her arm and hands.

HARPER  
Right.  
(beat)  
Do you need my help or something?

Harper wipes her hands on her pants.

VIVIAN  
 Why would I? I've done everything  
 else on my own.

Vivian wipes the floor down with another towel, then tosses  
 both towels into the washer and closes the lid.

HARPER  
 You have brain cancer. Right?

VIVIAN  
 Yeah.

HARPER  
 Just in your brain?

VIVIAN  
 I want my little sister back in my  
 life...and I hope that we can start  
 fresh here.

The shower stops.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)  
 You need to go. Call me, and we'll  
 have dinner soon?

Harper looks at a closed guest bedroom door, entranced.

INT. YOUNG VIVIAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Forty years ago. Young Harper pushes her way into the house.

YOUNG VIVIAN  
 Calm down. He's fine.

YOUNG HARPER  
 How could you?!

YOUNG VIVIAN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY

Young Harper charges toward the cracked-open guest bedroom  
 door. Young Vivian and Young Mia follow close behind.

YOUNG VIVIAN  
 (whispers)  
 Mark's an old client. He would  
 never...I'm offended that you'd  
 even--

Young Harper reaches for the door as Young Vivian grabs her  
 arm and pulls her back.

YOUNG VIVIAN (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Mark was with me the whole time.  
Listen to me. I'd never let  
anything happen to Carson.

YOUNG HARPER

Let me see my son.

YOUNG VIVIAN

(whispers)

If you wake him up now, he'll be  
cranky all night...

Young Vivian unhands Young Harper. Young Mia and Young Harper slowly relax and back away from the door.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. VIVIAN'S HOUSE - LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT

VIVIAN

Did you hear me? You have to go.

Still in a daze, Harper nods as she turns away from the door.

INT. MIA'S CAR - DAY

Mia drives, and Harper rests in the passenger's seat. Rows of trees pass outside the windows.

HARPER

Why haven't you finished your guest  
list yet?

MIA

I can't think of a single person I  
know that you don't.

HARPER

We should make our own list so we  
don't forget anyone.

Mia SIGHS.

HARPER (CONT'D)

You could lose the house. You  
definitely won't get my social  
security benefits or--

MIA  
 Stop. Can't we just go to a  
 courthouse and--

HARPER  
 That's how you want to celebrate  
 our forty-two years together?

Silence. Seconds pass.

MIA  
 I'll make my list next week.

HARPER  
 I need it by Wednesday.  
 (points at a house)  
 It's that one.

Mia pulls into the driveway, and her jaw drops.

MIA  
 God. Harper! This is stunning.  
 (beat)  
 I'm surprised that Beth agreed to  
 come along.

HARPER  
 She wants to get out of the house  
 just as much as everyone else.

MIA  
 Did you check with Will to see if  
 he's all right with it?

HARPER  
 For God's sake...can you give it a  
 rest for once?

Harper steps out of the car and slams the door shut. She  
 finds herself face-to-face with Ryland.

RYLAND  
 Bet you wish you had a guest house  
 now.

INT. LAKE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The living room extends to the water and boasts massive floor-  
 to-ceiling windows that showcase breathtaking views of the  
 lake and surrounding mountains.

Harper, Mia, and Ryland bring groceries into the room. They  
 stop, captivated by the scenery.

HARPER

I've never seen anything like this.

Mia lifts her hand to place it on the small of Harper's back as they admire the view but stops and lowers her arm.

Harper is oblivious, but Ryland notices.

RYLAND

Sucks that we won't get this view at dinner.

Everyone glares at the poorly placed dining table across the room, then back to the stunning lake view.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. LAKE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The dining table sits in the middle of the room. The couch and table now share the lake view.

Harper, Mia, and Ryland CHAT in the open kitchen as they prepare the meal. Upbeat MUSIC plays in the background.

INT. LAKE HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

In a large, rustic kitchen with modern appliances, the stovetop is covered in pots and pans, and the oven is full. Everyone busily preps their respective parts of the meal.

Ryland tastes the mashed potatoes cooking on the stove.

RYLAND

Harper, you're planning on seasoning these, right?

MIA

Leave them be.

RYLAND

Do you hate us?

Ryland picks up a saltshaker, and Mia rips it away.

MIA

Don't you dare. Harper and Beth can't handle sodium.

Harper spins, glancing at Mia with her brows furrowed.

HARPER  
Has anyone heard from Beth yet?

MIA  
Oh, dear, I forgot! She rang and told me that she would be a little late.

Harper looks up at the clock.

HARPER  
Twenty-seven-minutes late?

Mia picks up her phone and calls Beth.

MIA  
Straight to voicemail.

Ryland checks his phone, and Harper searches for hers.

RYLAND  
Nothing here.

Harper empties her purse onto the counter. A rouge tube of lipstick rolls onto the stovetop. Harper finds her phone.

HARPER  
Here it is.  
(beat)  
Hold on! I have new voicemails.

Harper plays the message over the SPEAKER.

BETH (V.O.)  
Harper! I'm here! My phone's about to die, and my new chair is stuck in the--  
(the phone BEEPS)  
Oh, hell's bells. Did it cut me off? Hello? Ah, shit.

Everyone runs to the front door.

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - DAY

Beth has made it halfway across the gravel driveway. Her heavy electric wheelchair wheels are stuck in the mud.

HARPER  
Beth!

BETH

Oh, thank God! I thought I'd be spending the night under the stars!

With a rapid THUD, THUD, THUD, Ryland drags his air tank wheels over the gravel driveway alongside Mia and Harper.

RYLAND

How long have you been out here?

BETH

Long enough to get shit on by a hawk.

Beth shows off her soiled shirt and arm. Ryland cowers in terror as his eyes dart up toward the sky.

RYLAND

There's a hawk?!

BETH

Oh, heck. It's long gone now.

Ryland stands erect and puffs out his chest.

RYLAND

Cool. No big deal. But if you see another one, be sure to let me know.

BETH

Oh, dear God.

HARPER

I have some wipes in the car.

Harper charges off to the car.

RYLAND

Where's your crazy bird cane?

BETH

Will thought it'd be easier if I used the chair today.

MIA

Don't you keep a spare in the car?

BETH

Don't you think I would have asked you to grab it if I did?

MIA

Let's get you inside, shall we?

Mia evaluates Beth's predicament. Ryland positions himself at the handles to push.

MIA (CONT'D)

I won't be needing your help.

Ryland throws his hands up.

RYLAND

It's your back.

Ryland sits on a nearby bench and settles in.

MIA

(to Beth)

I'm going to try to push you out.  
Give it a little gas on three.

BETH

I can do that.

Mia braces herself.

MIA

One...two...three!

Mia pushes, and mud flies everywhere as Beth throttles the gas. The chair doesn't budge, and Mia is covered in mud.

MIA (CONT'D)

Put it back in neutral!

Ryland CLAPS on the sidelines.

BETH

Am I out?

MIA

(wipes her face)

No.

Harper returns with a pack of wet wipes and hands it to Beth.

BETH

Thank you, sugah.

RYLAND

I bet I can find a...

Ryland stands and shuffles away with a THUD, THUD, THUD.

HARPER

(to Mia)

I don't know if the wipes will help you.

MIA

I'll wash up when I'm done.

(beat)

Let's see if we can wiggle it out.

BETH

How am I supposed to do that?

MIA

Just keep switching back and forth between forward and reverse.

Beth follows Mia's orders. Mia pushes and pulls the chair.

HARPER

Are you sure you don't want help?

MIA

I'm quite positive. Thank you.

Harper resigns to the bench. Ryland returns with a large stick. He sits next to Harper and cleans his new prize.

HARPER

Cool stick.

Harper hands him a wet wipe, and Ryland wipes the stick down.

RYLAND

Problem solved.

The chair doesn't move. Mia stands back, defeated.

MIA

Put it back in neutral, please.

HARPER

Are you doing okay, Beth?

BETH

I haven't had this much fun in ages.

MIA

All right. I give up.

(to Harper and Ryland)

Might I get a hand?

RYLAND

I was just getting comfortable with  
my new walking stick.

Ryland holds up his new prize, and Mia glares at him.

BETH

Let's see if we can't get this  
unstuck. It's too expensive to  
leave out here.

Harper and Ryland join them. Ryland hands Beth his air tank.

RYLAND

Could you please?

BETH

Of course, dear.

Beth holds the tank on her lap. Ryland secures his nasal  
tubes, and everyone takes their place behind the chair.

MIA

On three.

BETH

Forward?

MIA

Yes.

RYLAND

Full throttle.

BETH

You got it!

MIA

One...two...three!

They push. Beth's suddenly free chair speeds toward the  
house. Harper, Mia, and Ryland tumble to the ground.

Ryland's nasal tubes fly out of his nose. Beth stops her  
chair just before she crashes. Mia runs after Ryland's air  
tank. Harper crashes to the ground, unconscious.

RYLAND

I can't breathe!

A bird lands on Ryland. He SCREAMS, GASPS, and writhes.

MIA  
 Hold on! I'm getting your air!  
 (beat)  
 Harper! How are you doing?!

Ryland erupts into an ASTHMA ATTACK. WHEEZING and SCREAMING.

BETH  
 Is everyone okay?

Mia swats the bird away and fixes Ryland's air supply.

MIA  
 Just breathe.

Ryland stabilizes and gives Mia a thumbs up.

BETH  
 Should I come on over?!

MIA  
 No! Please stay put!  
 (beat)  
 Harper! Are you okay?

Mia rushes to Harper's side. She's still unconscious.

MIA (CONT'D)  
 Harper?!

Mia reaches for her phone. Harper opens her eyes and takes a deep breath. Harper SLURS heavily as she speaks.

HARPER  
 I'll live.

Mia attempts to help Harper to her feet, but her left leg is limp. They tumble back to the ground.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
 My leg is asleep.

MIA  
 Harper, say my name.

HARPER  
 I think I had another transient  
 ischemic...

Mia disappears and returns with a blood pressure monitor.

BETH  
 Harper! Did you have a stroke?!

Beth rushes over and gets stuck again. Everyone deflates.

MIA  
It's a mini-stroke.

HARPER  
I get them a lot...I'll be okay.

Mia places the monitor cuff around Harper's arm.

MIA  
I want to take you to the hospital.

HARPER  
What are my numbers?

MIA  
97/65.

HARPER  
(still slurring heavily)  
I'm fine. My slur is already  
starting to go away.

Harper slowly sits up and looks down at her pants.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
Shit.

MIA  
What?

Mia glances at Harper's lap. She's peed herself. The FIRE ALARM goes off.

HARPER  
The food!

Mia runs inside the house.

RYLAND  
I have a gym bag in my car.

INT. LAKE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Mia opens the windows and fans the smoke from the room.

Harper sports a gaudy mismatched tracksuit and sits on the couch with Beth. They stare at the view.

Ryland tosses the remains of the burnt tube of lipstick onto the coffee table in front of Harper and Beth.

HARPER  
 (slight slur)  
 What's that?

RYLAND  
 Looks like your particular shade of  
 power lesbian.

HARPER  
 Oh, no. I'm sorry.  
 (beat)  
 Is the food okay?

RYLAND  
 Everything but the potatoes.

HARPER  
 I thought I moved those off the  
 stove with everything else.

RYLAND  
 They didn't burn, but I threw them  
 out just in case.

BETH  
 (to Mia)  
 Do you need help?

MIA  
 We've got it.

Mia and Ryland disappear into the kitchen.

BETH  
 This is nice.

HARPER  
 Mia and I always talked about  
 retiring up here.

BETH  
 I can see why.

HARPER  
 Can I let you in on a little  
 secret?

BETH  
 Always.

HARPER  
 See that brown house across the  
 lake?

BETH  
The one with the big porch?

HARPER  
Yeah.

BETH  
It's a beauty.

HARPER  
I bought it for Mia.

BETH  
Oh my! Why aren't we having dinner there?

HARPER  
I haven't told her yet.

BETH  
What are you waitin' for?

HARPER  
I don't know.

BETH  
Are you two doing okay?

Harper hesitates and offers...

HARPER  
We're tired. You know how it is.

BETH  
Lord knows I do.

Harper and Beth stare at the house. Beth wipes a tear from her cheek.

HARPER  
What's the matter?

BETH  
Do you feel ready?

Harper considers Beth's question.

HARPER  
I can go anywhere my baby Carson can go, but I'll stay as long as I can for Mia. What about you?

BETH

I can't think of another thing I need to say or do.

HARPER

You're not anxious anymore?

BETH

I'm still anxious, but I'm pretty damn sure that I did the best I could with what I had. I'd like to believe that loved ones will remember me as such.

Harper wraps her arm around Beth.

HARPER

We will, honey.

BETH

Oh, not you, sugah. You're dyin' too. I'm talkin' about those who are going to build a shrine of me on their mantles when I'm gone.

The women laugh.

HARPER

How's Will doing?

BETH

God bless his heart. The man's so lost right now he couldn't pour piss outta his boots if I wrote the instructions on the heel.

(beat)

He'd lose every last marble if he saw me die.

HARPER

Oh, stop being so dramatic.

BETH

I'm not. He cried for months after he saw Charlie's dog get hit by a car. I know the man. I'm scared to death for him.

HARPER

Mia and I have plenty of room for you and a nurse in our home.

BETH

And give up the chance to be waited on hand and foot without a single ounce of guilt? No, ma'am...I'll be moving into hospice care next week.

INT. HOSPITAL - OFFICE - NIGHT

Vivian sits in a doctor's office and stares at an anatomy chart on the wall as DR. KAPUR (40s) draws her blood.

DR. KAPUR

Granted that we can tackle your infections, I think you'll find that this won't change your life as much as you think it will. It's not the death sentence that it used to be.

VIVIAN

It feels like it is. Some days, I can't even get out of bed.

DR. KAPUR

The medication isn't easy on your liver and kidneys, so that's not uncommon if you're still drinking.

(beat)

Have you cut back?

VIVIAN

Yeah.

(beat)

I was taking PREP the whole time, so I'm still shocked that I'm sick.

DR. KAPUR

PREP is only 90% effective, and sex workers are thirteen times more likely to get the disease.

Dr. Kapur sits on a stool in front of Vivian.

DR. KAPUR (CONT'D)

Please tell me you've found a new way to make a living.

Dr. Kapur studies Vivian, concerned. He leans in.

VIVIAN

I'm working with a different type of clientele now.

DR. KAPUR

Can I ask...what's in it for you?

VIVIAN

It makes me feel good. I can't be someone's wife. Hell, I invited my boyfriend to my wedding in my twenties. Monogamy isn't for me.

DR. KAPUR

Do you have a history of abuse?

Vivian's eyes water.

VIVIAN

I've been told that I was built for sex since I was ten.

DR. KAPUR

It doesn't have to be this way. I can connect you to--

Vivian plasters a wide smile on her face.

VIVIAN

Oh, listen. I chose this. I've tried a lot of things in my life, and this is the only job that makes me feel good.

(beat)

Besides, the money's good.

DR. KAPUR

While we're getting the disease under control, your body is more prone to infection. You're more susceptible to certain types of cancer, hepatitis...and a whole host of other issues. Do you have a support system at home?

VIVIAN

My sister is going to be back in my life soon.

Vivian crosses her fingers with both hands.

DR. KAPUR

Do you need help with that?

VIVIAN

We're having dinner next week, and I'll fix things then.

DR. KAPUR

Good. If you stay on top of your medication and avoid infection, you won't die any sooner now than if you didn't have AIDS. You should be able to get some good quality time in with her.

INT. LAKE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone sits at a table covered in a massive half-eaten feast. They eat and laugh. Harper's slur is gone.

HARPER

What's her motive to lie? It's not like she must be dying for me to talk to her.

MIA

Is she aware of that?

Harper glares at Mia, annoyed.

MIA (CONT'D)

Please give her a chance.

Harper's eyes dart to Ryland.

HARPER

Your potatoes taste amazing.

RYLAND

They're low sodium, and yet, they don't taste like paper.

Harper picks up a dinner roll and launches it at Ryland.

HARPER

(to Mia)

We might have dinner next week.

MIA

You must go. Even if she's not ill, it's the right thing to do.

HARPER

You have such a short memory.

Beth and Ryland share a frantic glance.

MIA

That's not fair, I--

BETH

How in tarnation did Vivian get  
your home address anyway?

Mia and Harper look at each other, baffled.

MIA

(to Harper)

Did you ask her?

HARPER

It didn't even cross my mind.

RYLAND

What did she want?

HARPER

To have me back in her life.

RYLAND

Does she know you're sick?

HARPER

I hope not. The Vivian I know would  
use it against me.

RYLAND

How is that even possible?

HARPER

She'd find a way.

BETH

What type of brain cancer did she  
say she's dying of?

MIA

Neuroblastoma.

BETH

Isn't that what you have, Harper?

HARPER

No, I have ganglioneuroblastoma.

RYLAND

Similar-ish.

MIA

Not at all, actually. Dr. Green  
said it's almost exclusively a  
child's disease.

RYLAND  
Or an old woman's lie.

HARPER  
It stays below the neck, too...it  
can spread to the brain, but it  
doesn't start there.

MIA  
Which makes this awfully sad.  
(beat)  
Oh! Speaking of Dr. Green...

Mia stands and pulls a watch out of her purse.

MIA (CONT'D)  
(to Harper)  
He suggested that I buy this watch  
for you. It alerts your emergency  
contacts if you have a stroke or  
fall.

HARPER  
You're asking me to wear a  
geriatric emergency alert bracelet?

MIA  
It could save your life, Harper.

Harper opens the box, and everyone gawks at it.

BETH  
Why, that's beautiful.

MIA  
I would feel much better if you  
wore it.

RYLAND  
Make me an emergency contact.

BETH  
Me too.

HARPER  
Fine.

Harper puts on her new watch while Ryland stands.

RYLAND  
Anyone want anything while I'm up?

HARPER

Do we have any of that Pinot Noir left?

RYLAND

Nope.

HARPER

Anything red is fine.

Ryland prances off with his air tank in tow.

A slow but thunderous FART erupts from Beth's colostomy bag. She quickly places her hand over her side.

BETH

Just a little spell. That's all.

Mia and Harper don't react, doing their best to pretend they didn't hear it.

MIA

This steak is fantastic.

They discreetly shield their noses as the smell hits them head-on; they tough it out.

HARPER

Ryland brought the steaks.

Another FART echoes through the room. Beth holds her side.

MIA

He really is a magnificent cook.

BETH

Well, shit. That could knock a buzzard off a gut wagon. I'm so sorry.

Both Mia and Harper try their best not to gag. Harper forces herself to offer a nonchalant...

HARPER

Don't worry about it.

Ryland strolls back to the table with a bottle of red wine.

RYLAND

Gross! I can taste that!

HARPER

What?

Harper's eyes water.

MIA

It must be wafting in from the open window.

Harper glares at Ryland, hoping he'll catch on and stop talking about it.

RYLAND

No way! Who, at this table, is sitting in their own shit right now?!

Ryland opens his mouth, and suddenly, a deviled egg hits him square in the face. The women burst out in LAUGHTER.

MIA

Harper!

HARPER

Sorry.

Ryland grabs a deviled egg and throws it at Harper.

BETH

Wait! Stop!

(beat)

Throw Harper's cookies. They're awful.

HARPER

Why is everyone picking on my cooking tonight?

Beth throws a cookie at Harper.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Ouch!

BETH

It should be soft.

Beth's colostomy bag releases another tremendous BURST OF AIR. She holds her bag. Everyone laughs.

RYLAND

It's YOU!

BETH

I have a bag of shit on my side and no asshole to clench it in. Of course, it's me.

HARPER

Leave her alone. The old bag has a colostomy bag problem.

Beth reaches for her walking stick and stands.

MIA

Sweetheart, they're just kidding. Please stay.

BETH

I need to empty my bag.

MIA

It's down the hall, first door on the left.

Everyone giggles like a bunch of teenagers. Beth hobbles off.

RYLAND

Who's going to clean this up?

A piece of egg drops off of Ryland's shirt.

HARPER

Just grab what you can.

Everyone looks around their space and GRUNTS as they pick up the food. Something KNOCKS faintly in the background.

RYLAND

What is that?

BETH (O.S.)

Harper!

HARPER

Coming!

INT. LAKE HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Harper opens the door and finds Beth on the toilet. She covers herself with a newspaper.

BETH

Oh, thank God.

HARPER

What's going on?

BETH

My new bag fell out of my purse when I sat on the toilet.

(MORE)

BETH (CONT'D)

Everything's a mess now...and out of reach.

HARPER

A mess?

Beth's eyes water.

BETH

You're my best friend, Harper.

HARPER

Oh god. Beth.

BETH

I'd do it for you.

HARPER

What do you need?

BETH

Please go into my purse and get the new tube...my fresh bag is over there.

Harper retrieves the bag and tube. She hands them to Beth.

HARPER

I'll grab the trash.

Beth holds out the old colostomy bag for Harper.

BETH

Here.

Harper rips the newspaper from Beth's lap and uses it to cover her hand as she takes the bag and throws it away.

BETH (CONT'D)

Hey! I needed that.

HARPER

I've seen a vagina before. I've never handled someone's shit.

Harper sees a small tube on the floor and picks it up.

BETH

No, that's the old--

The tube sprays brown liquid onto the tile floor and the side of Harper's face. Harper glares at Beth.

HARPER  
What was that?

Harper looks at the dark brown liquid on her hand.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
Oh my god, is this shit?! Do I have  
your shit on my face?!

BETH  
(laughs)  
It'll clean off just fine.

HARPER  
Beth! You should have told me!

BETH  
You grabbed it before I could say  
something.

Beth leans forward and MOANS.

HARPER  
Are you okay?

BETH  
No honey. I'm bleeding.

Harper studies Beth's face; tears roll down her cheeks.

HARPER  
(cries)  
What...what do you want me to do  
for you?

BETH  
I just want you to hold my hand.

HARPER  
I can call--

BETH  
No. I don't want that.

HARPER  
But it doesn't need to be this way.

BETH  
Please stay here with me. Will you?

Harper grabs Beth's hand. Beth bleeds out of her side, where her colostomy bag attaches to her body.

HARPER

Oh my god.

BETH

Just put the tissue over it.

HARPER

You're going to be okay, sweetie.  
Everything's going to be fine.

(beat)

I'm going to have Mia call Will.

BETH

No, don't. Please, I beg you. I'd  
prefer to do this with you if  
that's okay. Help me clean up.

HARPER

Okay.

Harper runs a bath. She lifts Beth off the toilet, helps her into the tub, and cleans her off.

BETH

Thank you, sugah.

HARPER

There you go. Good as new.

Harper blots the blood away and dries the area with a towel.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Talk me through attaching your bag.

Beth points to a sticker and the bag.

BETH

Take the plastic off the sticker  
part and stick it to my side.

Harper's hands shake as she follows Beth's instructions.

HARPER

Like that?

BETH

Now, take the other sticker off and  
then attach the bag.

Harper does as she's told.

HARPER

How's that?

BETH

Perfect.

Beth's eyes flutter, and her head bobs.

HARPER

Stay with me.

Still clothed, Harper joins Beth in the tub and holds her while the water runs.

BETH

Harper?

HARPER

Yeah?

BETH

You've got to stop punishin' everybody so much. Especially Mia and your sister--

HARPER

Shhhhhh, just rest.

BETH

Don't you shush me. I'm talkin' to you.

HARPER

I'm sorry, sweetie. What does that mean?

BETH

You can punish malice, but who are you to hold a grudge for so long over a mistake?

Harper leans her head back and weeps silently.

BETH (CONT'D)

Harper?

HARPER

Yeah?

BETH

Will was a great husband.

HARPER

He's a lucky guy, too.

Beth's hand drops into the water.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
Oh, sweetie. I love you.

Harper cries as she strokes Beth's hair. Mia KNOCKS.

MIA (O.S.)  
Is everything okay?

HARPER  
(through her tears)  
Help me, Mia.

Mia opens the door, and her face drops as she watches Harper cradle Beth's limp body in the bathtub.

MIA  
Oh, honey.

Mia enters and gently checks Beth for a pulse. She pulls out her phone and dials 911.

MIA (CONT'D)  
Could you please send an ambulance?  
That's right, 27859 West Shore.  
Thank you.

INT. LAKE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mia composes herself as she fills out paperwork amidst the bustle of a few PARAMEDICS and a POLICE OFFICER.

Will cries in Ryland's arms as EMTs roll Beth's body away.

Detached and in shock, Harper watches from the couch.

INT. LAKE HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Harper cries in the shower. She WINCES and folds over.

Blood mixes with the water at her feet.

INT. YOUNG HARPER'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

About forty years ago. Young Harper and Young Mia bathe Carson (10 mos). The women splash and play with him.

CARSON  
Mmmmmmm...Mama.

Young Harper and Young Mia SQUEAL at their adorable son.

YOUNG HARPER  
That's right! I'm your Mama!

YOUNG MIA  
And I'm your Mum! Say Mum!

CARSON  
Mama!

YOUNG HARPER  
(points to herself)  
Good job, buddy! I'm Mama!  
(points to Young Mia)  
Now, can you say, MUM?

CARSON  
Mama!

They CHEER.

YOUNG MIA  
What if he can't say Mum?

YOUNG HARPER  
Maybe it's because you talk funny.

Young Mia teasingly splashes Young Harper.

Young Harper leans over to kiss Young Mia but stops as she grabs her neck and WINCES.

YOUNG MIA  
That's been hurting you for a while.

YOUNG HARPER  
I think I just pulled a muscle.

YOUNG MIA  
I'd feel better if you went to the doctor on Monday.

CARSON  
Mum!

They SHRIEK, CLAP, and CHEER.

INT. LAKE HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT

The blood-red water at Harper's feet turns clear.

Mia enters with more clothes and a towel. Harper turns off the shower, steps out, and nearly falls. Mia catches her.

Mia attempts to help Harper dry off. She rips the towel away.

HARPER

I can do it.

MIA

Why do I even bother anymore?

Mia storms out. Harper reaches for the door but stops. She catches her reflection in the mirror, disgusted by her scowl.

EXT. RYLAND'S GUEST HOUSE - NIGHT

Ryland steps through the courtyard, past the main house, and toward his guest house. He enters.

INT. RYLAND'S GUEST HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ryland stomps into a simple studio with slumped shoulders and red eyes. The room is generic and floral.

Sofia makes the bed.

RYLAND

Don't bother with that. I'm just going to mess it up again.

Sofia covers the bed with a comforter. Ryland sits on a chair and changes out his oxygen tank. He chokes back tears.

RYLAND (CONT'D)

Please just go.

SOFIA

I'm almost done.

RYLAND

You need to get a life.

SOFIA

What?

RYLAND

You want to do something for me?

SOFIA

Not when you ask like that.

RYLAND

Do you care about me?

SOFIA  
Of course I do.

RYLAND  
Then go on vacation. Spend some money. Do what you need to do to forget that I'm here. Go be happy.

SOFIA  
If feeding me that bullshit makes you feel better, then fine, do it...but I still need you here.

Ryland's eyes water, but he doesn't cry. He shakes his head.

RYLAND  
Get out.

SOFIA  
What do you want, Ryland?

RYLAND  
I just told you.

SOFIA  
No. Before you die.

RYLAND  
Preferably.

Sofia reaches into her pocket and retrieves a chocolate. She carefully places it on Ryland's pillow, along with a remote.

SOFIA  
Call me if you need anything.

Sofia slowly turns toward the door and exits.

INT. HARPER'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Harper and Mia sleep. The clock reads 2:17 am. Harper jumps out of bed and runs to the bathroom.

Mia sits up as Harper RETCHES. She gets out of bed.

HARPER'S HOUSE - BATHROOM

Mia tiptoes in and finds Harper on the floor. Harper lurches over the toilet and RETCHES.

MIA  
Have you taken anything yet?

Harper gasps for air as she catches her breath.

HARPER

Not yet.

Mia retrieves some pills from the cabinet and fills a cup with water. Mia kneels beside Harper and waits. Harper slowly takes the pills and drinks the water.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Mia hesitates and reluctantly offers...

MIA

I'll leave you be.

HARPER

Wait. Can you sit with me?

Mia sits on the floor, and Harper rests her head on her lap.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Harper shuts her eyes as Mia strokes her hair.

MIA

I'm proud of you for scheduling dinner with your sister.

Harper looks up at Carson's photo on Mia's necklace.

HARPER

I'm going to see our baby again.

MIA

Try not to sound so eager.

HARPER

Of course, I'm not eager.

MIA

That's not how it seems.

HARPER

What are you talking about?

MIA

You know what? I'm sick of this.  
Farewell to both of you!

Mia rips her own necklace off and throws it in the toilet.

HARPER

What are you doing?!

Harper sits up and stares at Mia.

MIA

You've spent years pushing me away when you're not feeling well, and yet all you talk about is this blasted wedding.

(beat)

Why am I not enough for you anymore?

HARPER

I never said that! It's an awful fucking situation. Knowing I'm going to be wherever he is...is the one thing that makes this less terrifying.

(beat)

But I also need to know you'll be okay when I'm gone.

MIA

I can't marry you until I'm ready for you to go.

HARPER

Don't you think I would stop this if I could?

The women embrace as they sob.

INT. HOSPITAL COMMUNITY ROOM - DAY

Harper, Ryland, and Olivia sit in an awkward triangle. Harper fidgets with her hand brace.

OLIVIA

How did it make you feel to kick her out of the room?

RYLAND

It doesn't matter. Sofia can still have a good life.

OLIVIA

Do you still have that rock?

RYLAND

Maybe.

OLIVIA  
Can I have it?

Ryland reaches into his pocket and reluctantly hands it over.  
Olivia prances over to the trashcan and tosses it in.

RYLAND  
What are you doing?

Ryland runs over to the trash, retrieves the rock, and places it back in his pocket. He sits down.

OLIVIA  
Why did you do that?

RYLAND  
You didn't want it.

OLIVIA  
But why would you want it?

RYLAND  
I like having it in my pocket.

OLIVIA  
You've only had it for a week.

RYLAND  
I. Want. It.

OLIVIA  
It's an inanimate object.

Ryland sips his coffee and looks away.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
Give it back.

RYLAND  
It's mine now.

OLIVIA  
How do you think Sofia feels about  
keeping you around?

Olivia fixes her gaze on Ryland while he squirms in his seat.

RYLAND  
(to Harper)  
Wanna grab a beer?

HARPER

You're like Gollum with that damn rock.

Ryland makes the "Gollum" face.

RYLAND

The precious is mines.

Ryland HISSES at Olivia.

OLIVIA

(to Harper)

You're not helping.

HARPER

(to Ryland)

You're not going to get another chance to fix this, babe.

OLIVIA

Harper, please refrain from giving advice you're unwilling to take yourself.

Harper sits back and crosses her legs.

RYLAND

She deserves to be with someone who can take care of her.

OLIVIA

Is this how you want to be remembered by your wife?

RYLAND

(Gollum voice)

She doesn't know about me and the precious.

OLIVIA

Stop.

RYLAND

You're just a kid. What the hell do you know about damage?

OLIVIA

My dad died of prostate cancer when I was sixteen. You're a lot like him.

RYLAND

And look how you turned out.

OLIVIA  
Sure, after years of therapy.

Ryland stands and storms off, leaving Harper and Olivia alone in the big room with another empty chair.

They sit in silence until...

HARPER  
I'll have you know I am taking my own advice. Mia and I hit a rough patch last night and--

Tears roll down Olivia's face. She stands and charges out.

INT. VIVIAN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Vivian's dining room is small, cluttered, and humble. Harper and Vivian sit across one another with plates full of lasagna and salad. Harper hasn't touched her food.

VIVIAN  
What do you want to drink?

Harper plucks a bottle of Pinot Noir off the table.

HARPER  
I brought wine.

VIVIAN  
Oh! Right. Lemme grab some glasses.  
Be right back.

Vivian exits. Harper scrapes her lasagna back into the main dish. A wine stain on the old, cream carpet catches her eye.

INT. YOUNG VIVIAN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

The table decor is gaudy, but the furniture and setup are the same. Young Harper picks up some spaghetti with her fork. It's runny. She watches the sauce drip back onto her plate.

YOUNG MIA  
Stop that.

Young Mia slides her plate to Young Harper's and removes most of the spaghetti.

Young Vivian returns with a box of wine and plops it down onto the table's center.

YOUNG HARPER

Have you always taken clients while you're watching our son?

YOUNG VIVIAN

No! Never when he's awake. You two never fuck when he's in the house?

Young Vivian slathers a piece of bread with butter, dips it into her marinara sauce, and stuffs it into her mouth.

Her dog BARKS in the backyard. She gets up and shuts the sliding glass door. It merely dulls the BARK.

INT. VIVIAN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT

Vivian pours two glasses of wine at the table. Harper takes a drink and leans back as she studies Vivian's face.

HARPER

When were you diagnosed with brain cancer?

Vivian glances at Harper's empty plate.

VIVIAN

I see you liked your lasagna.

HARPER

Not at all. I put most of it back.

Vivian leans forward and places her elbows on the table.

VIVIAN

Well...you don't need to be a bitch.

HARPER

If I wanted to be a bitch, I'd lie to your face and tell the truth behind your back.

(beat)

But if you can't handle the truth about yourself--

VIVIAN

Maybe it's just that you're so fucking snide about it.

Vivian shoves a big bite of food into her mouth.

INT. YOUNG VIVIAN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

The dog continues to BARK in the backyard.

YOUNG VIVIAN  
 Shut up, Max! Damn dog.  
 (beat)  
 Funny how you have a problem with  
 this now, but when Pop was leaving  
 you alone when we were kids, you  
 were awfully quiet.

YOUNG HARPER  
 We've been out of that house for  
 over fifteen years. You should try  
 taking responsibility for your life  
 now that you're an adult.

Young Mia clears her throat and grips Young Harper's hand.

YOUNG MIA  
 Darling, I think we should drop it.

Young Harper takes a breath and pulls her shoulders back.

YOUNG HARPER  
 This is the last time we're leaving  
 Carson with you.

YOUNG VIVIAN  
 I wish you two could hear what  
 people say behind your backs. Rumor  
 has it you dykes have AIDS.  
 (beat)  
 Where else are you going to take  
 that poor kid?

Young Harper grabs her glass of wine and throws it in Young Vivian's face.

Young Mia wipes her mouth and leans back in her chair. She places her napkin on the table and composes herself.

INT. VIVIAN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT

HARPER  
 Why did you lie to me about having  
 cancer?

Vivian stares at Harper but can't muster a reply. Harper places her napkin on the table.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
I don't have time for this.

VIVIAN  
Would it kill you to try to have a  
relationship with me?

HARPER  
It honestly might.

INT. YOUNG VIVIAN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Young Vivian leans over the table and SLAPS Young Harper across the face. Before Young Harper can retaliate, Young Mia stands and pushes the women apart.

YOUNG MIA  
Stop!

YOUNG HARPER  
Did you hear what she just--

YOUNG MIA  
If you two want to salvage a  
relationship of any kind, you must  
both calm down.  
(beat)  
Let's be civil and talk this out.

YOUNG HARPER  
What exactly is there to salvage  
here? She put our child's life in  
danger for forty bucks.

YOUNG VIVIAN  
You know what, it's fine. Get the  
fuck out.

YOUNG VIVIAN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY

Young Harper charges toward the guest bedroom. The dog BARKS wildly in the background.

YOUNG VIVIAN (O.S.)  
Max! Shut up!

The sliding glass door opens with a WHOOSH. The BARKING gets louder.

## YOUNG VIVIAN'S HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM

Young Harper marches up to the crib and moves a pile of blankets. The baby's gone.

Young Mia and Young Vivian SCREAM in the other room.

## YOUNG VIVIAN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM

Young Harper runs into the dining room and finds a dripping-wet Young Vivian pacing with a phone in her hand.

Young Mia performs CPR on Carson (3 years old).

YOUNG VIVIAN

No, ma'am...I don't know how long he was in the hot tub! Please send an ambulance now!

Young Harper bumps into the table and SCREAMS. A glass of red wine spills onto the still-stained spot.

## INT. VIVIAN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT

VIVIAN

Please. I'm all alone. I don't have anyone else left.

HARPER

You've never once apologized for...

Harper stands and storms off.

VIVIAN

How long are you going to punish me?!

## INT. HARPER'S CAR - NIGHT

Harper weeps as she drives. Her left hand drops onto her lap, and she has a full stroke.

Her car veers off the road, and she rolls into an embankment.

An alarm erupts from Harper's watch. Moments pass. She lies lifeless as police lights flash through the windows.

VIDEOGRAPHER (PRELAP)

What do you want the happy couple to know?

GUEST 1 (PRELAP)

I just want them to know that I'm so honored to be a part of their big day.

(her voice cracks)

This...this is a love story that inspires everyone who knows them.

VIDEOGRAPHER (PRELAP)

What do you think Harper's going to do when she comes home and finds out that Mia's planned a surprise wedding for her?

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HARPER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MUSIC plays. Pale pink and gold grace the altar, aisle, and chairs. The room overflows with peonies and hydrangeas.

TWENTY beautifully dressed WEDDING GUESTS mingle as they wait for Harper. A VIDEOGRAPHER interviews GUEST 1.

GUEST 1

She's going to be so happy, and I can hardly wait to see the look on her face.

VIDEOGRAPHER

Do you think she'll say "Yes"?

GUEST 1

Of course, she will!

Another GUEST 2 strides up to GUEST 1 and takes the microphone.

GUEST 2

Let me say, Harper and Mia, you've been through so much, and I can't wait to watch you two enjoy your special day.

HARPER'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

Mia adds the finishing touches to her makeup in the mirror and glances at the clock.

Behind her hangs two stunning wedding dresses.

She pulls a small velvet box from her robe pocket and opens it. It's an engagement ring and wedding band.

A KNOCK. She quickly places the ring back in her pocket and answers the door. Ryland and Sofia rush in.

RYLAND

Did you get a medical alert from Harper's watch?

A baffled Mia blinks at Ryland.

MIA

No. I don't think so.

Mia quickly scrambles to find her phone.

MIA (CONT'D)

Did you ring her?

RYLAND

I tried, but it didn't go through.

SOFIA

If you give me her location, I can check if she's still there.

MIA

Please try Harper again. I'll ring her sister.

Ryland calls Harper; he shakes his head from side to side.

Mia paces as she dials her phone in the background.

SOFIA

(to Ryland)

Let me see her location. I can help if she's hurt.

Ryland gazes up at Sofia.

RYLAND

Thanks, doc.

SOFIA

You're welcome.

Sofia leans in and gives Ryland a quick kiss on the lips.

MIA

(in the background)

What do you mean you got in a fight?!

RYLAND  
(to Sofia)  
You better hurry.

Sofia runs out of the room.

Ryland dials his phone. Again, he shakes his head. He plops down on the edge of the bed.

Mia shoves her phone into her pocket, frustrated. She disappears into the bathroom.

MIA (O.S.)  
Could you plug Harper's location  
into my GPS?

RYLAND  
Sofia already left to check it out.

Mia pokes her head out of the bathroom.

MIA  
I should have gone with her.

RYLAND  
If Harper is hurt, Sofia can help  
her. And we need to stay here just  
in case Harper shows up.

Mia reenters in sweats. She sits next to Ryland.

MIA  
Perhaps you're right.

RYLAND  
What did Vivian say?

MIA  
She said Harper stormed out after  
an argument. Then she hung up on  
me.

RYLAND  
Maybe Harper just needs a little  
time to cool down.

A hard KNOCK on the door.

MIA  
Come in!

Dr. Green steps into the room.

DR. GREEN  
Where's my favorite patient?

RYLAND  
I'm right here.

DR. GREEN  
Oh, hi, Ryland. You're my other  
favorite patient.

MIA  
Hi Dr. Green.

Dr. Green hugs Mia.

DR. GREEN  
You look stunning, darling. Where's  
your bride?

MIA  
Still on her way, I hope.

RYLAND  
Hey, did you happen to get an alert  
from her watch?

DR. GREEN  
You know, I did. That's why I'm  
checking on her. Have you heard  
from her?

MIA  
No, she--

Dr. Green's phone RINGS.

DR. GREEN  
Please excuse me. It's the  
hospital.

Dr. Green steps aside.

RYLAND  
I wonder if she--

Mia's phone RINGS and she quickly picks it up.

MIA  
Hello?  
(beat)  
Oh God, which hospital?

Still holding his phone to his ear, Dr. Green offers...

DR. GREEN  
Memorial on Balboa; they're  
admitting her right now.

RYLAND  
I'll drive.

EXT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

A MEDICAL TEAM pulls Harper off an ambulance. They do chest compressions as they wheel her inside. She's unresponsive.

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Harper is intubated. ALARMS erupt in every direction.

She flatlines with an ear-piercing BEEEEEEEEEEEEEP. The MEDICAL TEAM takes turns doing chest compressions again.

Dr. Green rushes in.

DR. GREEN  
Patient, Ms. Carson, has a  
malignant left paraspinal upper  
mediastinal ganglioneuroblastoma  
encasing her left carotid artery.  
(beat)  
We've removed her left vertebral  
artery, and her others have been  
severely damaged. We'll need to  
place a stent in the left carotid  
to keep the blood flowing into her  
brain.

The medical team prepares to move Harper into another room.

BEGIN MONTAGE: BABY CARSON

INT. YOUNG HARPER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

-- Young Mia and Young Harper sit side-by-side and look through a catalog of men.

-- Young Mia finds a photo of a man who looks like Young Harper and holds it up to her face. They laugh as Young Harper attempts to mimic the man's expression.

INT. YOUNG HARPER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

-- Young Mia and Young Harper kiss and open a box from the lab. Young Harper removes something that looks like a turkey baster from a bag.

INT. YOUNG HARPER'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

-- An eight-month-pregnant Young Mia stands in front of a mirror. Young Harper rubs her belly and kisses Young Mia's neck.

INT. YOUNG HARPER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

-- Young Harper and Young Mia cuddle their infant son on the couch together as they rock him to sleep.

INT. YOUNG HARPER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

-- Young Harper holds her toddler's hands as he takes his first steps. The women laugh and cheer as Young Mia captures the event with a video camera.

INT. YOUNG VIVIAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

-- Young Harper and Young Mia hold each other as a MEDIC performs CPR on Carson. Young Vivian cries at the table.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

-- Young Harper and Young Mia hold each other as they cry in front of Carson's coffin. Young Vivian watches from a distance.

END MONTAGE

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM LOBBY - NIGHT

Mia and Ryland clasp hands as they wait in a desolate space.

The ER doors WHOOSH open, and the HUM of a LARGE CROWD grows.

Sofia and all TWENTY of the wedding attendees appear around the corner. Mia stands and embraces Sofia.

MIA

Why is everyone here? I--

SOFIA  
 They want to be here.  
 (beat)  
 How is she doing?

MIA  
 We don't know yet. No one's told us  
 a thing.

RYLAND  
 We haven't even seen Dr. Green  
 since we got here.

SOFIA  
 I'll go back there to see what I  
 can find out. I'll be back in--

Dr. Green strides into the waiting room.

DR. GREEN  
 Mia.

The whole room freezes and collectively holds their breath.

MIA  
 How is she?

DR. GREEN  
 Please come with me.

Mia nods at Sofia and Ryland before following Dr. Green into  
 the ER—the room BUZZES with nervous CHATTER.

INT. HOSPITAL - HARPER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Harper lies unconscious in a room by herself. Lines and tubes  
 invade her body. Her machines BEEP in a calm rhythm.

Mia enters with Dr. Green.

DR. GREEN  
 The tumor collapsed the carotid  
 artery and cut off the blood supply  
 to her brain--

DOCTOR 2 opens the door but doesn't enter.

DOCTOR 2  
 Excuse me for interrupting. Dr.  
 Green. I'm going to need you to  
 look at this.

DR. GREEN  
I'll be right back.

Mia nods. Dr. Green follows Doctor 2 into the hallway.

Mia staggers up to Harper and brushes the hair out of her face. She gasps and cries.

Dried blood blankets Harper's bruised face and matted hair. Tubes emerge from her throat and nose. Mia leans down, kisses her forehead, and gently holds her hand.

MIA  
I'm so sorry, sweetie, I--

Dr. Green reenters the room. Mia wipes her cheeks.

MIA (CONT'D)  
Is everything okay?

DR. GREEN  
He was confused about her chest X-rays. I let him know she lost the apex of her left lung in her last surgery.

MIA  
What happened tonight?

DR. GREEN  
I'm afraid she was driving when the stroke occurred.

MIA  
Is she going to be all right?

HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM

Sofia and Olivia sit on one end of a bench together and chat.

Ryland sits alone on the opposite end of the same bench and fidgets with the rock Olivia gave him.

Will lumbers up to Ryland.

RYLAND  
Hey, Will.

Ryland stands, and they hug.

Will pulls up a chair next to Ryland.

WILL  
How're you holdin' up?

Ryland barely grunts as he wipes his face. Will nods and pats him on the shoulder.

WILL (CONT'D)  
Well, this is...uh...

RYLAND  
Bullshit.

WILL  
That's about as accurate as it gets.  
(to himself)  
Bullshit.

RYLAND  
How are you and Charlie doing?

WILL  
I imagine it'll get easier eventually...but a son shouldn't have to worry about his parents as much as that kid has.

Ryland fixates on the stone in his hand.

RYLAND  
Is there anything Beth could have done to make it easier?

WILL  
Not a damn thing can prepare you to lose the love of your life.  
(beat)  
Not a damn thing.

Ryland watches a frail COUPLE (80s) shuffle to the exit arm-in-arm. They smile and giggle.

The men sit in silence for several long seconds.

RYLAND  
Can I ask you something?

WILL  
Shoot.

RYLAND  
This might be...I mean, this is...a little fucked up, but is there any part of you that's glad it's over?

WILL

Well, yes. That is a messed up thing to say to a grievin' man.

Ryland's air tank sits behind his back, between him and Sofia. He doesn't notice when Sofia turns around and checks its air levels. Will does.

WILL (CONT'D)

I never felt qualified to help Beth, and that was crippin'...

RYLAND

I'm sure you did a great job.

WILL

No. I didn't. And I'm a mighty proud man.

RYLAND

Could have fooled me.

WILL

She'd notice when I'd get upset because I couldn't help her. That's why she was plannin' to move into hospice care.

(beat)

Before she passed, all I could think of was how I was failing her. Now that she's gone, I understand how much the mere presence of someone you love is enough. That's a lesson I wish I learned earlier.

The men embrace for several seconds.

Sofia goes back to her conversation with Olivia.

RYLAND

Excuse me.

WILL

Sure thing.

Ryland steps up to Sofia and Olivia. They look up at him.

RYLAND

(to Olivia)

Will could use a little company.

OLIVIA

On it.

Ryland hands his rock to Olivia. She smiles.

Ryland embraces Sofia. Will and Olivia watch, proud.

HOSPITAL - BATHROOM

Mia flushes the toilet and hobbles up to the mirror.

Her eyes are red, and her makeup is a mess. She splashes water on her face and wipes away her smeared eyeliner.

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Mia shuffles in. Everyone holds their breath.

MIA

She's had a stroke. It's a little too early to tell what kind of damage it caused.

RYLAND

Is she awake?

MIA

No. Not yet.

Dr. Green bursts in and taps Mia on the shoulder.

DR. GREEN

Can I talk to you for a minute?

MIA

Of course.

Ryland holds Sofia's hand.

OLIVIA

What's going on?

They look at Dr. Green and Mia across the room.

Mia cries and hugs Dr. Green. Everyone watches on, horrified.

RYLAND & SOFIA

Shit.

Dr. Green charges back to the ER entrance. He holds the door open and waits for Mia.

MIA

(to everyone)  
She's stabilizing.

Everyone breathes. The room fills with CHATTER.

RYLAND

Is she going to be okay?

DR. GREEN

It's too early to tell. We're still doing testing at the moment, but things are looking much better now.

WILL

Should we stay here?

DR. GREEN

No. I suggest that you all go home and get some rest.

(to Mia)

You can take one person back.

SOFIA

(to Ryland)

You should stay here. I'll go home and let the dogs out.

Ryland quickly kisses Sofia on the lips and joins Mia.

MIA

(whispers)

Look at you.

INT. HOSPITAL - HARPER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mia lies on a recliner that she's moved next to Harper's bedside. Ryland rests on a couch against the wall.

Harper isn't awake, but all of her machines HMMM and BEEP precisely as they should. Everyone is still.

MIA

What was that with Sofia?

RYLAND

I'm not sure why such an intelligent woman would keep loving such a dumb man.

MIA

Stop. You're stubborn and misguided at times, but you're not gormless.

RYLAND

Either way, I don't deserve her.

MIA

You do. We've all been dealt a shit hand...that's all.

RYLAND

She asked me to move back into the bedroom with her.

MIA

And you should.

After a long silence, Ryland nervously CLEARS HIS THROAT.

MIA (CONT'D)

What's that?

RYLAND

I didn't say anything.

MIA

But you would like to.

Ryland sits up.

RYLAND

Do you think she's still...never mind.

Silence. Mia offers...

MIA

It's not as though we have anything better to do.

Mia pushes her chair back so she can see Harper and Ryland at the same time.

MIA (CONT'D)

Come on. Out with it.

RYLAND

If I move back into the room with her, should I...I mean. Do you think she'd expect me to...

MIA

Have makeup sex?

RYLAND

Yeah.

MIA

I assumed you did before you moved out. Can you?

RYLAND

I mean...it's been a while.

MIA

Well, for God's sake, no one forgets how to have sex.

RYLAND

Okay. I'm not saying I did. It's just that...she's still the perfect human I married twenty years ago, and I'm a...doughy blob with man-tits and an air tank.

Mia unsuccessfully attempts to stifle her laughter.

RYLAND (CONT'D)

Thanks.

MIA

I'm not being cheeky. You're a lot sexier than you give yourself credit for.

RYLAND

I'm really not.

MIA

You are. Let me get a look at you. I'll give you my honest opinion.

Ryland stands and struts around with his air tank in tow.

MIA (CONT'D)

You're perfect. Quite strapping, actually.

RYLAND

Yeah?

Harper opens her eyes.

MIA

Do another little turn.

HARPER

(groggy)

Take off your shirt.

Ryland and Mia rush to Harper's bedside. Mia presses the "call" button on Harper's remote.

MIA

There you are. How are you feeling?

HARPER

Like someone punched me in the groin and then ripped my neck open.

RYLAND

Accurate.

HARPER

What'd they take this time?

MIA

You have a shiny new stent in your carotid artery.

HARPER

Am I going to die now?

MIA

I...

Dr. Green charges in and assesses her vitals.

DR. GREEN

I see someone decided to join us.

HARPER

I feel so underdressed.

The men look down at their suits.

RYLAND

We were at a fundraiser.

HARPER

Together?

DR. GREEN

Can I talk to Harper alone for a minute?

Mia and Ryland nod and leave the room.

HARPER

I don't have any secrets from either one of them.

Dr. Green takes a seat next to Harper.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Is everything okay?

DR. GREEN

Mia told me that your sister, Vivian, is sick.

HARPER

Noooo. She doesn't have cancer.

DR. GREEN

Mia filled me in a little and--

HARPER

Mia needs to stop pushing--

DR. GREEN

All I can legally say is, if I were you, I'd give her a chance to explain herself.

Harper sits silently for a few seconds.

HARPER

Can I have a little time alone?

DR. GREEN

Of course.

Dr. Green removes Harper's phone from a nearby shelf and places it on her lap.

DR. GREEN (CONT'D)

Just in case.

Dr. Green exits. Harper stares at her phone.

INT. HOSPITAL - CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Ryland and Mia sit at a table. Mia stares down at her coffee.

RYLAND

What's going on with you?

MIA

I've robbed her of a wedding.

RYLAND

We can put another one together.

MIA

I'm going to be here with her until she's released and--

RYLAND

I won't, and I'm sure everyone else would be more than happy to help.

Vivian enters the cafeteria. Mia and Ryland watch her.

MIA  
That's Harper's sister.

Ryland quickly ducks.

RYLAND  
Should we hide?

MIA  
I want to know what that cunt  
wants.

Mia stands, and Vivian looks right at her.

MIA (CONT'D)  
Why have you come?

VIVIAN  
I...I just want to apologize to you  
and Harper.

MIA  
You've done enough, Vivian. Go  
home.

VIVIAN  
I...I didn't mean to--

MIA  
You don't have cancer. You're a  
liar, and I should have protected  
Harper from you.

VIVIAN  
I didn't mean to lie. I just--

MIA  
I don't want you here, and neither  
does Harper. Go.

Vivian opens her mouth to speak and stops herself. She turns  
and rushes out. Her phone RINGS, and she picks it up.

VIVIAN  
Hello?

RYLAND  
(to Mia)  
You okay?

MIA  
Yes. I'm sorry about that.

RYLAND  
For what? I'm a little hard now.

INT. HOSPITAL - HARPER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Harper speaks to Vivian on the phone.

HARPER  
I need you to take responsibility  
for your actions.

Vivian CRIES quietly on the other line.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
Vivian? Are you there?

VIVIAN (V.O.)  
Yeah.

HARPER  
Was this a mistake? Should I hang  
up?

VIVIAN (V.O.)  
You're right. I'm sorry. I just  
want my family back.

HOSPITAL - HALLWAY

Vivian sits on a chair outside of Harper's room. She watches Harper through a glass window and holds her hand over her mouth as she sobs.

HARPER (O.S.)  
Tell me the truth...Are you sick?

VIVIAN  
I have AIDS. I'm sorry I didn't  
tell you at dinner...because you  
wouldn't be in the hospital if I  
had...the truth is that I've been  
ashamed of myself for a very long  
time...I just want my sister back.

Vivian folds over and WAILS.

INT. HOSPITAL - HARPER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Harper rests. Dr. Green enters and checks her machines.

DR. GREEN

Any luck?

Mia enters with a KNOCK.

MIA

May I come in now?

HARPER

Only if you're coming to take me home?

DR. GREEN

I need to watch you for a while before letting you go.

HARPER

Don't let me die in here.

DR. GREEN

Don't worry...you'll be out soon.

HARPER

Where's Ryland?

MIA

In the loo.

Dr. Green exits. Mia sits at Harper's side.

MIA (CONT'D)

Listen, I need to apologize. I should have respected your wishes with everything...I just...I don't know what got into me...

Mia cries and lies next to Harper.

HARPER

It's okay.

MIA

I should never have pushed you to talk to Vivian.

HARPER

She'll be here tomorrow.

INT. LIMO - DUSK

Mia and Harper hold one another on a bench seat. The windows showcase a glass chapel in the distance. It stands alone at the top of a hill overlooking the ocean.

Both women wear wedding dresses, but Harper is blindfolded.

HARPER

I already know we're going to the symphony. Do I really have to wear this while we're alone?

MIA

I only told you so you would agree to let them dress you while you were blindfolded. Everyone chipped in for this, so please act surprised.

Harper takes Mia by her hand and squeezes it.

MIA (CONT'D)

What?

HARPER

I want my last memory to be of you holding me.

MIA

I think that's a wonderful aim.

The women pull each other closer.

EXT. GLASS CHAPEL - DUSK

The limo pulls up to the chapel. Mia helps a blindfolded Harper out of the car. MUSIC plays in the background.

HARPER

Are we late?

MIA

They'll wait.

HARPER

How do I look?

Mia stares at her bride, speechless.

INT. GLASS CHAPEL - DUSK

Everything is set up for an OVER-THE-TOP sunset wedding, with twinkle lights, a live SINGER, and VIOLINISTS.

Mia and Harper enter. Mia hands Harper off to Ryland. He positions Harper at the aisle's entrance.

The room is at capacity with ONE HUNDRED ATTENDEES. The audience sits in the dark.

Mia stands in the middle of the aisle with a microphone. A soft spotlight illuminates her and Harper. Violins PLAY SOFTLY in the background.

HARPER  
(whispers to Ryland)  
What's going on?

Mia nods at Ryland, and he removes Harper's blindfold. Harper scans the room, awestruck.

MIA  
When I first met Harper, she was this ambitious grad student sitting alone in a coffee shop burning the midnight oil, as they say...and somehow, I just knew I was going to spend the rest of my life with her, even before I said hello.

Everyone cries.

MIA (CONT'D)  
But over our forty-two-year relationship, it seemed like every time we tried to make it official, something always stopped us.

Sofia and Vivian share a box of tissues as they watch.

RYLAND  
Not this time!

The crowd lets out a little CHUCKLE.

MIA  
At first, it was the law and our families. We had to learn to be okay with others not being okay with us.  
(beat)  
As soon as those battles were won, Harper got sick. It seemed that time was never going to be on our side. It still isn't...but I'm ready to make the best of it.

FIVE PEOPLE outside of the chapel release lanterns into the sky. The attendees raise lit sparklers.

Mia strides up to Harper and gets down on one knee. Harper wobbles as Ryland holds her up.

MIA (CONT'D)  
Harper, will you marry me?

HARPER  
Right now?  
(Mia's face drops)  
Yes!

Harper thrusts her hand out. Mia places a ring on her finger.

The crowd CHEERS. Twinkle lights replace the sparklers, and a SINGER with an acoustic guitar sings Alessia Cara's "Stone."

Mia strolls to the altar.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

Harper and Mia get married.

-- Ryland escorts Harper down the aisle.

-- Mia says her vows and places a wedding ring on Harper's finger.

-- Harper says, "I do."

-- Harper recites her vows and places a wedding ring on Mia's finger.

-- Mia says, "I do."

-- The PRIEST speaks as Harper admires Mia.

-- Mia and Harper kiss.

-- Ryland and Sofia hold hands.

-- The crowd cheers.

END MONTAGE

EXT. GLASS CHAPEL - NIGHT

The SONG continues to play—the vast ocean sparkles in the background. Everyone laughs and dances the night away.

Harper sits and watches everyone. Mia joins her, and they hold one another.

INT. RYLAND'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Ryland stands before a full-length mirror in a pair of white underwear. His air tank rests at his side.

He holds his stomach in and poses, then lets his stomach out.

INT. RYLAND'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ryland wears a robe and stands in his doorway. He watches as Sofia reads a book in bed.

She glances up, sees Ryland, and scoots over to make room.

SOFIA

Are you moving in for good?

RYLAND

If it's okay with you.

SOFIA

Can I help you with that?

RYLAND

No, I...

Ryland stops himself and looks at Sofia.

RYLAND (CONT'D)

Yes, please.

Sofia gets out of bed and helps Ryland with his air tank.

He opens his robe.

Sofia looks down, surprised. He quickly closes it.

RYLAND (CONT'D)

Sorry, I feel like a flasher. I should have asked your permission...it's been so long I don't know how to--

Sofia cuts him off with a kiss.

Ryland attempts to close his robe. Sofia stops him and pulls it down off his shoulders.

It's supposed to fall to the ground, sexy and sleek. Instead, it gets caught on his air tank tubes, and they're forced to fumble around with the tangled mess.

SOFIA  
Just, let me--

RYLAND  
What if we--

They remove the tubes from his nose and untangle them.

Once they replace the tubes in his nose, they kiss. This time, it's seamless and passionate.

Ryland lowers Sofia to the bed.

RYLAND (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry.

SOFIA  
I know.

They kiss again. Sofia turns out the light.

INT. HARPER'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Harper and Mia kiss in bed.

HARPER  
That was the most beautiful wedding  
I have ever seen.

MIA  
I'm glad you liked it.

HARPER  
There's not a single thing I would  
have done differently.

MIA  
Good.

They hold one another.

HARPER  
Do you remember that lake house  
across from where we had the  
dinner?

MIA  
The one with the porch that  
overlooks the lake?

HARPER  
Yeah.

MIA  
No. Not at all.

Harper smiles at Mia, and she laughs.

MIA (CONT'D)  
What about it?

HARPER  
It's yours.

Mia sits up and studies Harper.

MIA  
Are you serious?

HARPER  
I mean, if you don't like it, I  
suppose you could always sell it-

MIA  
I wouldn't dare.

Mia kisses Harper.

HARPER  
Are you happy?

MIA  
The only thing that could make this  
day better is...

Mia admires Harper.

HARPER  
I'll always be with you.

The women hold each other.

EXT. MIA'S LAKE HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

The lake sparkles in the morning sun. The new lake house is even more beautiful up close.

Two empty monogrammed rocking chairs sit on the porch overlooking the lake. One is labeled "MIA," and the other is labeled "HARPER."

Mia steps onto the porch, clutching a cup of coffee, and sits in her chair. She rocks back and forth and stares out at the lake.

She has a new necklace. This time, the pendant has an old photo of Harper holding baby Carson.

THE END

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