

ALMOST IN HER SHOES

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. RICE FAMILY KITCHEN AND DINING AREA - DAY

RAE ANNE (a beautiful blonde, wholesome, vibrant 17-year-old academically astute cheerleader) is browsing her computer for college and scholarship options at the dining room table.

DARLA (RAE ANNE's mother, an attractive women in her early 40's) is cooking in the kitchen on a Saturday afternoon.

RAE ANNE

Mama, I've been looking for cheerleading scholarships to cover college expenses.

DARLA

I really want you to be able to go to college, dear. You've worked so hard to get to your status in school. I've told you before, if you can find enough scholarship money to go, then I'm all for it.

Darla puts a casserole in the oven and lets it slam shut. She then gets a dish cloth to wipe down the counters.

RAE ANNE

It's hard to get a full ride to most colleges. Most only offer cheerleaders stipends. And a lot of them require you to travel to compete. But I found one school that gives out 12 to 14 full scholarships based on your academic merit and your performance on a video you send in.

Darla runs into the dining room to see what Rae Anne is talking about. She looks over Rae Anne's shoulder.

DARLA

Oh my goodness! Is that for real?

RAE ANNE

Yeah. It's in Hawaii.

Darla stands straight up in shock.

DARLA

Hawaii? Ooh, I don't know, honey.

Darla plays with Rae Anne's hair for a few quiet moments.

RAE ANNE

Can I at least try, Mama? I've got the grades and I'm the squad leader this year. I can make up the routines to suit the requirements.

DARLA

I don't want to hold you back from your dreams. Go for it! If it's free, it's for thee! Oh, Hawaii! That's a long way! I'm gonna miss you!

Darla gives Rae Anne a big hug.

RAE ANNE

I'm not there yet!

DARLA

Oh, but you always get what you put your mind to. Oooh! I'm so excited for you! My little girl is going to Hawaii! Oh, should I make you a muumuu?

RAE ANNE

Good one, Mama! OK, so I'll check out their past videos and see what they are looking for. Gabriela and I can coordinate it and then I'll apply. Thanks, Mama!

DARLA

I'm just so glad one of my daughters has a dream. What a role model you will be for Hope. The church will be so proud of us.

RAE ANNE

Mama, what does it matter what the church thinks about us?

DARLA

After Faith got pregnant, all I heard from those ladies was how I was an unfit mother for y'all. In the stores, at the football field, and even when the preacher was doing his sermon! I'm trying to do the best I can, just like any mama.

RAE ANNE

You're doing just fine, Mama.

DARLA

Thank you, darlin'. You always
have my back.

EXT. BAY TREES HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Rae Anne is in front of her cheerleading coach's camera on the track that goes around the football field. She shows her fresh, vibrant personality.

RAE ANNE

Aloha! My name is Rae Anne Rice.
I am from Bay Trees High School in
Bay Trees, Alabama! I have been
cheering all my life. We have won
in several State and local
competitions and it's so much fun!
I'd like to be in your program one,
because I'd like to experience an
interesting world outside of rural
Alabama and 2) to do that, I need
the scholarship in order to go to
college at all. I believe this
video will show my dedication to
cheering and my resume will show my
scholastic achievement.

MISS EASTON (Bay Trees's cheerleading coach, a pretty,
athletic looking young lady in her early thirties) gives Rae
Anne a thumbs up from behind her camera.

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

OK, girls! Let's cheer!

Miss Easton turns on the music. Rae Anne, Gabriela and the
rest of the cheer squad get in formation and perform a game-
ready cheer highlighting University of Hawaii themes (i.e.
Warriors, Rainbows, Bows, Green/White), displaying standing
and running tumbling, back handsprings, tucks, stunting and
dance skills. The music goes off at the end of the
performance. The camera zooms in on Rae Anne.

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

Thank you for watching my video. I
hope it brought you aloha.

Miss Easton stops recording. She sends the video to her
laptop. Rae Anne and the girls walk up to take a look.

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

Oh, that's so cool! Thanks Miss
Easton. You girls rocked! You
were awesome!

CHEER SQUAD

Yay! Cool! Thanks! You're going
to Hawaii! Oooh!

MISS EASTON

Would you like a little Hawaiian
music while your credits roll?

RAE ANNE

Oh my gosh, you can do that? Oh my
gosh, yes! Thank you!

As the girls watch on, Miss Easton adds the instrumental music to "All Hawaii Stand Together" by Liko Martin and then the credits to include Rae Anne as the producer, Gabriela as the Assistant Producer, the Bay Trees High School Cheer Squad as the performers and Miss Jennifer Easton as the coach/videographer. Rae Anne starts to cry.

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

It's beautiful, Miss Easton! I'm
so glad you did this for me! It
has everything they are asking for!

MISS EASTON

My pleasure. I'll send this to
your email when I get inside.

Miss Easton heads toward the school. The girls corral around Rae Anne with shrieks of joy.

EXT. BAY TREES HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - EVENING

Bay Trees High School football game.

Rae Anne and the other school cheerleaders, in their red and white uniforms, lead a few cheers, complete with red and white pompoms. Rae Anne, as the leader, is front and center, flocked by her squad.

CHEERLEADERS

Foxes, foxes, will win this day!
We'll send the bobcats on their
way!

They break formation to watch the game.

FAITH (Rae Anne's 19-year-old sister), her three-year-old daughter LUNA, and HOPE (Rae Anne's 14-year-old sister) exit hastily behind the cheer squad.

RAE ANNE
Hey, where ya goin'? The game just
started.

Darla storms by Faith, Luna and Hope.

DARLA
Let's get a move on it!

Faith signals to Hope to follow their mother with Luna. Hope
picks Luna up and runs along to catch up with Darla. Faith
moves closer to Rae Anne.

FAITH
You're lucky, Rae Anne. You're
Mama's perfect child. I can't
catch a break with her! See ya
later!

Rae Anne feeling helpless.

RAE ANNE
Oh OK, bye!

GABRIELA (Rae Anne's best friend and co-cheerleader of Latina
coloring) inquires about the scene.

GABRIELA
What's that all about?

RAE ANNE
Looks like mama and Faith had
another argument for the umpteenth
time. Ever since Faith had Luna,
mama has been real hard on her --
for everything! She works at a low-
paying job, she has no time to go
to school because she works long
hours, she cannot afford daycare,
so mama and her work opposing
shifts so Luna is taken care of.
She really can't catch a break.
Life seems to get harder and harder
for her. And mama is so uptight
about what the church will think of
her.

GABRIELA
Oh, I'm so sorry, Rae. I hope
things get better for her and
y'all. Now I think I appreciate
why my mama always says college is
the way to go.
(MORE)

GABRIELA (CONT'D)

Your sister's got it rough! I'd hate to be in her shoes!

RAE ANNE

Yeah, me too.

The Bay Trees crowd cheers for some outstanding play.

GABRIELA

Let's get this cheer machine going!

RAE ANNE

OK, girls!

Rae Anne gives the other cheerleaders a knowing look. They all cheer. Bay Trees spectators chime in on the bleachers. They stomp on each boom.

CHEERLEADERS AND SPECTATORS

Hey, Bay Trees! Hey, Bay Trees!
Hey, Bay Trees, Bay Trees, Bay
Trees! Boom chicka boom, chicka
boom, boom, boom. Say boom chicka
boom, chicka boom, boom, boom. Say
BOOM! Yay!

INT. LOCAL MCDONALD'S - EVENING

Cheerleaders (including Rae Anne and Gabriela), color guards and other students fill the booths, eating, singing pro Bay Trees affirmations camp style, talking across the restaurant, general milling around.

ALL

We're the foxes, red and white. We
done broke the bobcat's sight.
We're the foxes, red and white.
Now we are the ones with might!

The football team enters the restaurant. Two players carry Trevor on their shoulders. (TREVOR is the clean-cut, All American football champ type. He is a bit egocentric as well.) Hands clap.

ALL (CONT'D)

HEY! OH! YAY!

Whistles are heard. The two football players put Trevor down. Trevor takes a bow. The whole team goes to get their food.

After Trevor has purchased his food, the cheerleaders make room at their table for Trevor to sit next to Rae Anne.

TREVOR
Thank you, ladies. Don't mind if I do.

GABRIELA
That was a great running pass you did, Trevor.

RAE ANNE
It was a great catch from Luis as well.

TREVOR
He couldn't have caught it if I didn't pass it perfectly.

Rae Anne and the rest of the cheerleaders give Trevor a shocked look at his egotistical remark.

RAE ANNE
Oh my god, I can't believe you said that!

OTHER CHEERLEADERS
Yeah! That was rude!

GABRIELA
Luis is my cousin, you doofus!

Trevor realizes that he did not hit a good chord with the girls, especially Rae Anne.

TREVOR
Just kidding. Sorry, Gabby.

GABRIELA
That's Gabriela to you. Do you think every Gabriela goes by Gabby?

TREVOR
Alright, alright!

RAE ANNE
I've got to go to the ladies room.

Trevor gets up to let Rae Anne squeeze out, then sits right back down.

INT. SMALL HALLWAY TO RESTROOMS - EVENING

Rae Anne exits the ladies room. Trevor is standing right there.

TREVOR
Care for a walk home?

RAE ANNE
No, that's OK. The girls and I are walking home together tonight.

TREVOR
Aw, c'mon. You girls are like sticky peas in a pod. You're always together. I haven't seen you since you went to cheer camp and started researching that faraway college you want to go to.

RAE ANNE
University of Hawaii?

TREVOR
Yeah, that one I guess. Why do you have to go so far? You could go to University of North Alabama or wherever I end up and we'd still be a couple.

RAE ANNE
I didn't work so hard to stay in Alabama, Trevor. I told you I think we both need to broaden our horizons before we commit to each other.

TREVOR
Yeah, I know. You told me that before. I don't get it, but hey, I just need help with my algebra. You know it's my second time taking it and I need to pass it to go to college. Can you help this poor dude?

Trevor fakes a pout. Rae Anne falls for it.

RAE ANNE
Alright, let me tell the girls and we can go.

Rae Anne goes to tell her friends to go home without her.

TREVOR
Thanks, I love you for this.

Rae Anne returns and Trevor and she leave the restaurant.

INT. TREVOR'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Rae Anne notices Trevor's algebra book and notebook are on the bed.

TREVOR

My ma and pa are visiting my Aunt Missy in Muscle Shoals. She's got some sort of cancer or something. They'll be back on Sunday.

RAE ANNE

Do you really have a problem with Algebra?

Trevor laughs.

TREVOR

It could look suspicious, couldn't it. I swear it's not. Have a seat. Want anything to drink? Soda, coffee, tea?

Rae Anne sits next to Trevor on his bed as they have always done growing up.

RAE ANNE

No thanks. Let's just get to the algebra.

TREVOR

You don't mess around, do you.

RAE ANNE

I've gotta be home by midnight, Trevor. Let's just get started.

Rae Anne opens the book at where a book marker is placed.

TREVOR

It's equilateral equations.

RAE ANNE

I see that. Good. This is easy to teach.

Trevor grins.

TREVOR

I'm not sure if I'm so easy to learn.

RAE ANNE

OK, write that equation down.

Trevor writes the equation from his book down into his notebook, $2y + 6 = 24$.

TREVOR

There.

RAE ANNE

What is the sign of the 6?

TREVOR

Positive.

RAE ANNE

So you are going to do the opposite to each side of the equal sign. Minus 6 from the left and minus 6 from the right.

Trevor subtracts 6 from 6 on the left hand side of the equation and 6 from 24 on the right.

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

OK, so what do you get?

TREVOR

$2y = 18$. So 18 is the answer, right?

RAE ANNE

No. You still have more to do. What times 2 equals 18.

TREVOR

Ah, y is 9!

RAE ANNE

Exactly, now do the next problem on your own.

Trevor does it just fine. Rae Anne smiles and gives a high five. Trevor gives her a high five back and a passionate kiss. They fall back into the bed. Passion commences and clothes come off. The algebra book and notebook fall to the floor as they make love. They snooze for a bit. Rae Anne's eyes pop open.

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

Oh, no! I gotta go!

Trevor's squeezes her in.

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

No! I gotta go! My mama will kill me!

Rae Anne rushes to put her clothes on. Trevor pulls his on.

TREVOR
I'll walk you home.

RAE ANNE
No, you'll get in trouble. I'll
just say I was at Gabriela's late.

TREVOR
You sure?

RAE ANNE
Yeah, I'm sure. Done it before.

Rae Anne runs across the street and two houses down to her house as Trevor looks on. She unlocks her front door and sneaks in.

INT. GABRIELA'S HOME KITCHEN - DAY

Gabriela and Rae Anne are sitting at the table in front of the kitchen picture window, eating cookies and doing their homework. Gabriela notices Rae Anne is absentmindedly daydreaming as she gazes out the window, cookie in hand.

GABRIELA
Earth to Rae Anne. You gonna eat
that cookie or let it melt in your
hand?

RAE ANNE
Oh, yeah, um, sure. What were you
saying?

GABRIELA
I didn't say anything. I just saw
you through the corner of my eye,
just holding that cookie for an
eternity, staring off into space.
What's up?

RAE ANNE
You promise not to tell anyone?

GABRIELA
Sure.

RAE ANNE
You know the night of the Bobcat's
game I went to Trevor's house to
help him with his math?

GABRIELA

Oh no, Rae. You didn't fall for that one, did you?

RAE ANNE

We've been friends since we were three. Being in his room was second nature. When I saw the Algebra books on his bed, I was sure he was for real. Before I knew it, we did it.

GABRIELA

You and Trevor? Ooh! How was it?

RAE ANNE

Honestly, I don't even remember. I always hoped my first time would be memorable. I got scared afterwards and ran home.

GABRIELA

Oh my gosh! You're not pregnant, are you?

RAE ANNE

I don't know.

GABRIELA

How far along would you be, do you think?

RAE ANNE

Well, we did it the night of the Bobcat game. I'm about a week late for my period.

GABRIELA

You know you could have gotten the morning after pill without parental consent.

RAE ANNE

How? Ashley's mom works the drug counter. Plus, the morning after was Sunday. I had to go to church with mama.

GABRIELA

Oh, did you pray for forgiveness?

RAE ANNE

Not funny, but yes. What am I going to do?

GABRIELA

I don't know, Rae. Does your mom know? Trevor! Does he know?

RAE ANNE

I can't tell anyone until I know for myself!

GABRIELA

OK, I'll tell you what you're going to do. You know my mom is an OB/GYN.

RAE ANNE

Yeah, the only one in town. And one of the church ladies my mom looks up to! Oh, God!

INT. VICTORIA CRUZ, MD'S OB/GYN OFFICE - DAY

Rae Anne sits opposite DR. CRUZ (a medium build Latina female physician in her mid-fifties) in her office with the door closed.

DR. CRUZ

So, Rae Anne, I'm not sure if I should congratulate you or pity you. You are pregnant. What are your goals with this pregnancy?

RAE ANNE

Does my mama have to know what we talk about here?

DR. CRUZ

No, I abide by the confidentiality due to all my patients no matter what their age.

Rae Anne let's out a partial sigh of relief.

RAE ANNE

I don't want the baby. Can you get rid of it for me? I couldn't get the morning after pill, because Ashley Brown's mama works at the drug store and it was Sunday anyway. I don't want anyone to know about this.

DR. CRUZ

I understand your predicament, Rae Anne, but a child is a beautiful gift from the Lord.

RAE ANNE

But I want to go to college. I'm trying for a full cheerleading scholarship to the University of Hawaii. I'll need a reference from Coach Easton. How can I get that if I can't cheer? How can I cheer if I'm sticking out to here? This is no gift! It's a curse!

Rae Anne starts to cry.

DR. CRUZ

There are services I can help you with.

Rae Anne looks at Dr. Cruz in disbelief.

DR. CRUZ (CONT'D)

If you carry your baby to term, you would have it in June, in time to give it up for adoption. You would still have time to get ready to start college in August or September.

Rae Anne sobs her case.

RAE ANNE

But Dr. Cruz, I have interviews and cheer camps as part of the application process. I cannot be pregnant for these! And the more I keep this baby in me, the more attached I'll get; I know it. Then what? My life will be ruined! My mama thinks I'm the smart, stable one. She's so proud of my accomplishments 'til now. Please, is there anything you can do to take this baby away from me without anyone knowing I even had it?

DR. CRUZ

Rae Anne, I am in the baby giving industry. My license in Alabama does not allow me to take a baby from its mother.

RAE ANNE

But it's not a viable baby yet?
Please, time is not on my side!

DR. CRUZ

I cannot afford to go to prison for violating the rules of my license. I have Danny and Jose in college and Gabriela still at home, plus their papa. I have to be here for them.

RAE ANNE

So what do I do now?

DR. CRUZ

You know, sometimes God throws us a curve ball just to get us on the path he intends for us. Just don't fight it. I'm not saying not to pursue your dreams, just work with what God has given you along the way.

INT. RICE FAMILY HOME - DAY

It's a Saturday morning. Rae Anne has slept in and wakes up to see her younger sister, Hope is not there in their room. She gathers her laptop and rushes to the dining room to set it up. She moves her placemat to her side. She goes to the kitchen and pulls out some Pop Tarts from the pantry and pours a glass of milk. She checks out her mother's room off of the kitchen. No one is there. She tip toes across the living room to Faith and Luna's room. No one is home.

RAE ANNE

Phew!

Rae Anne puts her food down on the placemat. She pulls up the Cambridge Reproductive Health Consultants webpage and quickly orders her mifepristone and misoprostol tablets for an abortion. Rae Anne looks down at her stomach with sadness and guilt.

RAE ANNE (V.O.)

So sorry baby. Oh, God! Baby? This is too real, but it is the best for you now. I can't be a good mama just yet. Please forgive me.

Rae Anne pulls up her Common Application and checks that all materials are in for the University of Hawaii, University of North Alabama and University of Mobile. She sends them off.

Darla, Faith, Luna and Hope unexpectedly walk into the house in their bathing suits, having been to the local water park.

RAE ANNE

Oh, it was so quiet y'all startled me.

DARLA

I let you sleep in. Whatcha been up to?

Rae Anne closes her laptop and starts to clean up the dining room table.

FAITH

Gee, Mama. You never let me sleep in when I was Rae Anne's age.

DARLA

You had a one-year-old baby by the time you was Rae Anne's age. How was I going to let you sleep in?

FAITH

Stay on Mama's good side, Rae Anne. It'll get you everywhere. I ain't goin' nowhere. I'm the bad girl.

LUNA

Mama's a bad girl? You go in time out, Mama!

Everyone giggles at Luna's cuteness.

DARLA

Alright, my bad girl and my good girls, I'll need your help soon. I need you to unpack your beach bags and help me with lunch.

EXT. BAY TREES HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - EVENING

The cheer squad is in pyramid formation with Rae Anne on top. She tumbles forward to dismount, throwing up in the process. Some of the squad are spilled upon. The rest of the squad dismounts.

CHEER SQUAD

EW!

GABRIELA
Rae, are you OK.

RAE ANNE
Yeah, I'm fine. Gotta go!

Rae Anne rushes for the school. Gabriela runs after her.

INT. GIRLS' BATHROOM/LOCKER ROOM - EVENING

Gabriela runs into the bathroom behind Rae Anne.

GABRIELA
What happened? Are you, OK?

RAE ANNE
Morning sickness. Only I get it at night! Ugh!

Rae Anne takes a travel-sized bottle of mouthwash out of her backpack, quickly pours herself a capful, swishes it in her mouth and spits into a sink.

Rae Anne and Gabriela go to the dressing area of the locker room, to their respective lockers. They attempt to change into their gowns. Rae Anne gets her zipper up most of the way, but has by now gained some pregnancy weight.

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)
Ooh, I can't get this zipper up all the way!

GABRIELA
Let me see if I can help you.

Gabriela notices a large shopping bag with a blanket, towels and a small cosmetic bag in Rae Anne's locker, but is in too much of a hurry to make anything of it.

RAE ANNE
I don't know. I think I have some baby fat already.

GABRIELA
Oh, no! That's not good. Maybe we can switch dresses? I'm a tad bigger than you.

RAE ANNE
OK, let's try that. Hurry!

Rae Anne and Gabriela trade dresses in haste. They look at each other. Both girls notice that Rae Anne's shoes do not match Gabriela's dress. A brief panic arises between them.

GABRIELA
Let's go barefoot.

RAE ANNE
Oh great, barefoot and pregnant!

GABRIELA
Hey, not me!

Rae Anne and Gabriela ditch their shoes in their lockers, slam the doors and run out of the locker room as the rest of the cheer squad runs in to change into their homecoming outfits.

EXT. BAY TREES HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - EVENING

The high school band is in the middle of playing a song on the field, while color guards do an accompanying routine. They move forward during their performance, followed by Trevor and Rae Anne in evening homecoming attire. The game commentator announces the coronation of the Homecoming King and Queen.

COMMENTATOR
And now the moment you have been waiting for, the homecoming King and Queen of your choice, Trevor Jones and Rae Anne Rice! Will the candidates approach the podium?

The spectators clap and cheer. Trevor and Rae Anne walk up to the podium, Rae Anne grabbing Trevor's arm for stability. Trevor and Rae Anne speak under their breath.

TREVOR
Where have you been, girl?

RAE ANNE
I'm pregnant.

Trying to cover up looking shocked, feigning a smile for the crowd.

TREVOR
Are you keeping it?

Rae Anne gives Trevor a dirty look.

RAE ANNE

Like I have a choice in Alabama.

Rae Anne and Trevor feign a smile for the spectators while cameras flash.

Everyone is silent as last year's winners crown them with a sash and crown and give Rae Anne a bouquet of flowers.

COMMENTATOR

I now present to you Bay Trees's
Homecoming King and Queen of 2026.

The spectators cheer once again. The band starts to play
"Celebration."

INT. DECORATED SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - EVENING

Around 50 students are sitting at round tables with gold vinyl tablecloths and artificial floral centerpieces on them. Red, white and gold balloon arches are on one wall of the gymnasium with photographers standing by to take pictures. Gabriela's mom and other moms are at various locations as chaperones. Rae Anne, sitting next to Gabriela, confides that she is going to tell Trevor she is pregnant.

RAE ANNE

I think I'm gonna have Trevor walk
me home tonight.

GABRIELA

Aw, that's good Rae. He needs to
know. I can walk home with the
girls.

RAE ANNE

Yeah? Thanks.

COMMENTATOR

And now, the first dance is for the
new King and Queen. Trevor and Rae
Anne, will you do the honors of
opening this celebration with the
first dance.

Trevor and Rae Anne come onto the dance floor at the center of all the tables. Slow dance music starts and they dance. The audience swoons at the sight of long time friends, assumed lovers, dancing. Trevor and Rae Anne talk so that only they can hear each other.

TREVOR

So when did you find this out?

RAE ANNE
I don't know. About a couple of weeks ago.

TREVOR
How far are you?

RAE ANNE
A couple of months.

Trevor steps back a bit, but does not break his hold on Rae Anne.

TREVOR
A couple of months! Geez, when were you going to tell me?

RAE ANNE
I was hoping never, but I knew that was not fair.

TREVOR
Can I walk you home tonight so we can talk?

RAE ANNE
Naw, Gabriela and I are walking home together tonight.

TREVOR
Oh, OK.

Trevor brings Rae Anne close. Rae Anne puts her head in Trevor's shoulder and starts to sob. Trevor looks on pensive.

The music stops.

COMMENTATOR
Let's give them a round of applause. This year's homecoming king and queen. May you be an example to your peers!

That is just too much for Rae Anne to bear. She rubs her eyes, keeping a fake smile.

RAE ANNE
I gotta go freshen up.

Rae Anne walks quickly towards the locker room.

INT. GIRLS' BATHROOM IN LOCKER ROOM - EVENING

Once in the locker room, Rae Anne hastily changes into her street clothes. She folds Gabriela's dress and puts it on the shelf in her locker.

She grabs the shopping bag and her backpack and races for the wheelchair stall, strategically placing them within reach.

She takes her sneakers, jeans and underwear off and keeps her socks on. The clothes that came off go into her backpack, the sneakers set aside the toilet for quick entry if need be.

Rae Anne grabs the cosmetic bag from the shopping bag and pulls out the four misoprostol tablets, throwing the packaging and the envelope they came in into the trash bin. She tucks two on each side of her lower jaw, between her cheeks and gums. She pulls out her iphone from the front pouch of her backpack and sets it to vibrate silently after 30 minutes and puts it on the sink.

ERIC and LARA (a horny teenaged couple) enter the bathroom.

ERIC

Are you sure it is safe here?

LARA

Sure. In a girls' room, we're always at the mirror primping ourselves. You see anyone here?

ERIC

No. Good, let's get this started!

From inside the wheelchair stall, Rae Anne hears kissing and moaning.

RAE ANNE (V.O.)

Get a room, guys!

Rae Anne gets a devilish smile on her face, then flushes her toilet.

LARA

Ooh, ooh!

ERIC

What the hell, Lara! You said there was no one in here!

Eric and Lara run out of the bathroom.

Rae Anne pulls out a textbook and a highlighter to try to make the time pass easier.

Gabriela silently uses a bathroom stall, flushes, washes her hands in the common area and leaves.

Rae Anne's iphone vibrates after 30 minutes. Rae Anne swallows what little is left in her mouth.

RAE ANNE (V.O.)

So far, so good. Just like I read.

Rae Anne continues to read for another hour, as seen by the clock overhead. A sharp pain hits her stomach.

RAE ANNE (V.O.)

OW! That must be the first cramp.

Oh, God that hurts!

A tremendous amount of blood spills into the toilet.

RAE ANNE (V.O.)

Whoa!

Another painful cramp happens. Rae Anne throws up in the garbage can and expels another heavy flow of blood into the toilet. Some of her vomit has spilled down the front of her. She grabs a towel from her bag and wipes it off. She looks down at the large amount of blood in the toilet and starts to sweat.

RAE ANNE (V.O.)

Oh my gosh! That would fill way more than two pads in an hour already. Oh, God! Something's gone wrong! I'm in trouble. Oh, my God!

Rae Anne grabs her cell phone off the sink and dials.

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

Gabriela. I'm in trouble!

Gabriela's voice is heard at the other end of the phone.

GABRIELA (V.O.)

What? Where are you?

RAE ANNE

I'm in the locker room bathroom, in the wheelchair stall. Come quick!

GABRIELA

OK, I'm coming in just now.

Gabriela rushes into the bathroom and knocks on the door of the wheelchair stall.

Rae Anne gets up to unlock the door, makes a bloody mess on the floor and sits back down on the toilet.

GABRIELA (CONT'D)

Holy cow, Rae! What's going on?

RAE ANNE

I'm having a miscarriage, but it's bigger than I thought it would be.

Gabriela is now suspicious.

GABRIELA

A miscarriage and it's bigger than you thought it would be? How would you know what a miscarriage would be like, Rae?

RAE ANNE

Oh shit, now I really blew it. I had an abortion, damn it! What the fuck am I gonna do?

GABRIELA

Let me get my mom.

RAE ANNE

No! Let's just call 911.

GABRIELA

They have to get by the adults, Rae. My mom's gonna notice.

RAE ANNE

OK, but don't tell her it's an abortion.

GABRIELA

She's gonna know.

Gabriella runs out. Rae Anne quietly sobs. Gabriela and Dr. Cruz briskly walk in. Gabriela gawks behind her mother.

DR. CRUZ

Rae Anne, tell me what happened?
And are you OK?

RAE ANNE

I'm so sorry, Dr. Cruz. I had to do it. I've got to make something of myself. I can't stay here. I don't want to be like Faith.

DR. CRUZ
Gabriela, call 9-1-1, please.

GABRIELA
Yes, Mama.

Gabriela dials and walks out of the stall.

Dr. Cruz notices the blister pack of misoprostol in the garbage pail, free from any vomit. She picks it up and puts it in her pocket.

RAE ANNE
No, Dr. Cruz, please!

DR. CRUZ
Rae Anne, I have to do things legally. Whoever see's this has to turn it in. It's the law.

EMT's rush in.

DR. CRUZ (CONT'D)
Gabriela, if you are still there, call Darla and tell her we're taking Rae Anne to the hospital.

GABRIELA
On it!

RAE ANNE
Oh, no!

EMT's load Rae Anne onto their gurney and rush her out of the bathroom and through the gym; Dr. Cruz following. Gabriela looks on in fear for Rae Anne.

INT. EMERGENCY OBSERVATION ROOM - EVENING

Rae Anne is sitting in a hospital bed in a hospital gown, her left hand hooked to an IV bag for fluids. She has a cotton ball taped in the crook of her left arm from a blood draw. A box of disposable diapers are on her bed within reach and she is wearing hospital socks on her feet. Dr. Cruz is by her side in a chair holding her hand.

RAE ANNE
I'm so sorry to put you through this.

DR. EMMETT (a pleasant-looking senior female Emergency Room resident) enters the room with an iPad in hand.

DR. EMMETT
Rae Anne Rice?

RAE ANNE
Yes, ma'am.

DR. EMMETT
I'm Dr. Emmett. How are you feeling?

RAE ANNE
Tired and sort of woozy. And my feet are freezing.

DR. EMMETT
I hear you are experiencing some heavy bleeding. When did it start?

RAE ANNE
Around 9:00.

DR. EMMETT
This evening?

RAE ANNE
Yes, ma'am.

DR. EMMETT
It's almost 10:00 now. How much blood did you expel?

RAE ANNE
It seemed like a friggin' toilet bowl full. I started panicking, shaking and sweating. I thought I was getting a fever.

Having a change of heart, Dr. Cruz pipes in.

DR. CRUZ
She had a miscarriage.

Rae Anne looks at Dr. Cruz in confusion.

RAE ANNE
I thought you said you had to do things legally. That you have to turn in that blister pack in your pocket.

Dr. Cruz swallows hard and darts a glance at Rae Anne as if to say, "I was trying to help you out." Dr. Emmett flushes in panic, but maintains professional composure.

DR. EMMETT
When was your last menstrual
period?

RAE ANNE
Middle, towards the end of August.

DR. EMMETT
So you were pregnant. How far
along do you think you were?

RAE ANNE
Ten weeks exactly.

DR. EMMETT
I have to ask this, sweetie. Was it
a desired pregnancy?

Rae Anne blushes with humiliation and starts to cry.

RAE ANNE
No.

DR. EMMETT
Rae Anne, who are you with tonight?

RAE ANNE
My best friend's mom, Dr. Cruz.

Dr. Emmett is surprised that Dr. Cruz is a doctor and not Rae Anne's mom.

DR. EMMETT
Doctor? Doctor Cruz, may I have
the blister pack?

Dr. Cruz reluctantly gives the blister pack to Dr. Emmett. She puts on gloves, puts the pack into a ziplock bag, and labels it.

DR. CRUZ
I picked it out of the trash can in
the school bathroom where I found
her.

DR. EMMETT
Rae Anne, I am going to contact an
OB/Gyn to follow up with. She is
not onsite, so I will have to call
her. You may be here awhile.

DR. CRUZ
That's my partner, Dr. Sheridan.
She's on call.

Dr. Emmett looks down at her iPad, then back up.

DR. EMMETT

Looks like your hemoglobin is quite low. That could explain your fatigue, weakness and cold feet. I'll order a transfusion of blood for you just now. Can we call someone at home for you?

RAE ANNE

My mom's been called. She should be here soon.

Dr. Emmett takes her gloves off and disposes them into the biohazardous waste bin on her way out.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM UNIT HUB - EVENING

Dr. Emmett confers with the Attending ER Physician.

As Dr. Emmett walks out of Rae Anne's room, she calls to the passing Attending ER Doctor, DR. KEITH GRIFFIN (a male physician in a white lab coat, in his late 40's) across the nursing station.

DR. EMMETT

Keith! I need to talk to you about this patient.

Dr. Griffin keeps his stride.

DR. GRIFFIN

Sure. Walk with me.

They walk to a quiet alcove or end of the ward.

DR. EMMETT

We have an unwanted pregnancy here. She admitted that she performed her own abortion. The lady that brought her in is a doctor. She had the blister pack for miso on her.

DR. GRIFFIN

A doctor? And she brought her in? What is she expecting? Surely she knows what happens when you offer help to an abortion patient!

DR. EMMETT

I don't know. She said she picked the miso pack out of the trash when she found the girl. I don't think she is involved with the abortion at all.

DR. GRIFFIN

Hmmm. The girl? How old is she?

DR. EMMETT

Seventeen. What is the protocol to handling this here?

DR. GRIFFIN

Handling it here? You know we can't! We don't! We'd lose our licenses!

DR. EMMETT

I get that. That's why I'm asking. She is hemorrhaging and diaphoretic, lethargic and woozy.

DR. GRIFFIN

Fever?

DR. EMMETT

No fever.

DR. GRIFFIN

Well, that's a plus. Did you put her on IV fluids?

DR. EMMETT

Yes. And I ordered a blood transfusion. Her hemoglobin was below 7.

DR. GRIFFIN

Eeeh! That's borderline treatment. We're caught between a rock and a hard place on this one. Play it careful. No D&C. I'll call the OB/Gyn on call for consult.

DR. EMMETT

Thanks.

INT. EMERGENCY OBSERVATION ROOM - EVENING

Darla storms into the room, not noticing Dr. Cruz there at first.

DARLA

What the hell, Rae Anne! What were you thinking?

Rae Anne starts to cry. Dr. Cruz stands up out of her chair.

DR. CRUZ

Darla.

DARLA

Vicki? What are you do-? You knew? How long? I thought we were church sisters! How could you keep this from me? Who else knows? The whole church, I bet! Oh, God!

DR. CRUZ

I told no one, Darla. It is against the law to reveal the personal information of my patients.

DARLA

Most everyone at that school attends our church, Vicki. What is the church going to think of me now? I can't catch a break, with my divorce, Faith and now Rae Anne. I gotta move and I can't afford to. I feel like Hester Prynne with a scarlet letter on my chest.

Dr. Cruz gives Darla a hug. Darla sobs heavy. Rae Anne is still crying.

DR. CRUZ

Darla, this is not about you. We all have our secrets to bear. Some of our secrets are just more easily hidden than others. Now, talk to your daughter. She needs your compassion more than anything right now.

Dr. Cruz leaves. Darla takes her place in the chair beside Rae Anne's bed.

RAE ANNE

I'm sorry, Mama. I never wanted to let you down.

DARLA

No, I'm sorry darlin'. I was just so shocked and hurt that I was the last to know. How did this happen?

Rae Anne gives her mother a look like, "Don't you know about the birds and the bees?"

RAE ANNE

Mama.

DARLA

I mean who?

RAE ANNE

Trevor.

DARLA

Oh. You've been friends for so long. Did he force you?

RAE ANNE

No, Mama. It just happened and I regret it. I won't be seeing him again. He was starting to get too possessive anyway.

DARLA

Too possessive?

Rae Anne dries her eyes with her hands and wipes them on a tissue.

RAE ANNE

Yeah, he started nagging me to stay in Alabama with him, whether I went to college or not.

Darla stands up and bends over to give Rae Anne a hug.

DARLA

Oh, my little dreamer. I'm proud of you for trying to forge through your application process through all this. That must have been emotional to handle alone.

RAE ANNE

I wanna go, Mama. What's going to happen to me, Mama?

Rae Anne starts to cry again.

DARLA
Shhhh! Shh! Shh! Everything's
gonna be alright. We'll get you
there.

DR. SHERIDAN (a female OB/GYN in her early fifties) walks
into the room.

DR. SHERIDAN
Rae Anne, my name is Dr. Sheridan.
Who do we have with you this
evening?

RAE ANNE
My mom.

DR. SHERIDAN
Is it OK to speak with your Mom in
the room?

RAE ANNE
Yes, ma'am.

DR. SHERIDAN
How are you feeling?

RAE ANNE
Like crud.

DR. SHERIDAN
And where is the source of this
crud?

RAE ANNE
My vagina. I did my own abortion
with mifepristone and misoprostol.
I'm bleeding much more than I read
up on.

Darla interrupts.

DARLA
There's something we can do about
that, right?

DR. SHERIDAN
Unfortunately, Alabama law states
that it is illegal to do anything
that might be misconstrued as
completing an abortion or assisting
in any way. Dr. Griffin ordered
plasma to replace the blood lost.
All we can do is let nature take
its course.

(MORE)

DR. SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Rae Anne, you may be wearing pads for a few weeks until the bleeding subsides, but we will get it under control here before sending you home. And we will continue with the fluids to keep you hydrated. You will stay overnight for observation only and be released tomorrow. We will send you to a room in a few minutes. Take care.

Rae Anne and Darla look devastated.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Rae Anne is dressed in her street clothes, including her bloody sneakers. Her shopping bag and backpack are ready to go. Darla is sitting in the chair at Rae Anne's bedside. OFFICER FLEMING (a husky officer in his late forties, wearing a close crew cut) enters the room.

OFFICER FLEMING

Rae Anne Rice?

RAE ANNE

Yes, sir?

DARLA

What's this about?

OFFICER FLEMING

Ma'am, is this your daughter?

DARLA

Yes, sir. What is going on?

OFFICER FLEMING

Rae Anne, I am Officer Cyril Fleming and I am here to arrest you for the murder of your child under Alabama's Chemical Endangerment of a Child Law, Code 26-15-3.2.

Rae Anne starts to cry.

DARLA

You cannot do this? She's not on any chemicals? What do you mean, chemical endangerment? Of what? There's no baby to endanger!

OFFICER FLEMING

Ma'am, your daughter took abortion drugs to induce an abortion, which is against the law in Alabama. Rae Anne, I have a subpoena for your arraignment on Monday at the Family and Juvenile Courtroom in the Municipal Courthouse just downtown at 10:00 a.m.

RAE ANNE

What's an arraignment?

OFFICER FLEMING

That's where they will formally charge you, inform you of your rights and give you the opportunity to make a plea. Until then, you are allowed to go home under house arrest and seek counsel or if you cannot afford counsel, the court will provide an attorney to defend you. Good luck!

Darla joins Rae Anne in tears. Officer Fleming exits the room.

INT. RAE ANNE AND HOPE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Rae Anne is in her pajamas, under the covers, cell phone up to her ear. A tissue box is on her nightstand. A waste basket is full of used tissues.

INT. GABRIELA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

GABRIELA

So what happened? My mom wouldn't tell me anything.

INTERCUT - RAE ANNE AND HOPE'S BEDROOM AND GABRIELA'S BEDROOM

RAE ANNE

They kept me overnight and I was arrested this morning.

GABRIELA

Arrested?

RAE ANNE

Yeah, I'm on house arrest and not allowed to talk about it.

GABRIELA

Oh, I'm so sorry Rae. So will you still be able to go to Lizzi's sleepover next weekend?

RAE ANNE

Oh gosh! I completely forgot about that. I'll have to call and cancel. I can only be at home, church and school.

GABRIELA

Oh no, Rae! Oh God, I'm so sorry.

RAE ANNE

Yeah, me too. Gotta go.

Rae Anne hangs up the phone. Release intercut.

INT. JUVENILE COURTROOM, BAY TREES, ALABAMA - DAY

ANNA BALDWIN (a prosecuting attorney in her early thirties, slender and looking stern and savvy in her black and white business suit with dark-framed glasses and dark hair in a contemporary short corporate haircut) stands and prosecutes to the letter of the law.

ANNA

Your honor, the minor in question here is an honor student at Bay Trees High School. She excels in the sciences. I am sure she knew what she was doing when she took mifepristone and misoprostol before aborting her unborn child. Under Alabama's chemical endangerment law, Code of Alabama 26-15-3.2 (Act 2006-204), it is a felony to expose a child to controlled or chemical substances. This statute of the law is interpreted by the Alabama Supreme Court to include unborn children. I recommend incarceration, your honor.

JUDGE HELEN GATES, (a fifty-year-old woman of worn appearance) presides. She seems more concerned with keeping her courtroom rolling, as if to meet a quota of daily cases or be demoted. She speaks with a fast drawl, in a sarcastic and condescending manner.

JUDGE GATES

Defense ready?

CHRISTY FEENEY (a more simply dressed defense attorney with red hair, slightly younger and appearing less savvy than Anna Baldwin, tries to push her case. She rises, with flushed face.

CHRISTY

Your honor, yes, my client is an honor student. She has dreams of becoming a doctor someday.

JUDGE GATES

Certainly hope it's not an OB/GYN!

Christy looks down at Rae Anne.

CHRISTY

Your honor, she took care not to delay her abortion any more than possible. She did it at 10 weeks, no more. The morning after pill is readily available over the counter, but in Bay Trees there is only one pharmacy and the pharmacist is the mother of a friend of hers at school. This is a small town. Everyone knows everyone. My client did not want to jeopardize her mother's standing in her church. The odds were stacked up against her. You see, the stigma of having an abortion -- public scrutiny and lack of privacy in a small town -- forced her to break this law.

JUDGE GATES

There is no bending this law, Ms. Feeney. I've heard enough.

Judge Gates's harsh demeanor makes Rae Anne cry in desperation. Judge Gates directs her speech to Rae Anne.

JUDGE GATES (CONT'D)

Crocodile tears don't cut it here, darlin'. Please rise.

Rae Anne wipes her tears and tries to stand tall.

JUDGE GATES (CONT'D)

This case will be moved to be heard in an Adult Court. Miss Rice, do you understand that with the abortion drugs in the equation, I must try you as an adult with a Class A felony murder?

Rae Anne covers her face in shock and drops to her seat.

JUDGE GATES (CONT'D)

Young lady, I am not through with you. How do you plead?

Rae Anne pushes herself back up. She knows she is guilty by interpretation of the law, so looks down at Christy for an answer.

CHRISTY

Your honor, my client pleads not guilty.

Scene blurs as Judge Gates reads Rae Anne her rights.

JUDGE GATES

OK, you have the right to remain silent. Anything said can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney. If you cannot afford one, you will be appointed counsel. Bail set at \$500.00. House arrest continues. You'll be notified of your trial date. NEXT!

Christy hugs Rae Anne.

INT. EILEEN'S AT-HOME HAIR SALON - EVENING

Anna gets her monthly trim. She is wearing pressed jeans and a white trendy sweater with her stilettos.

EILEEN (a hairdresser in her sixties) is giving Anna a trim while AGNES and IDA (two elderly ladies) are under dryers. A couple of other dryers are empty.

EILEEN

I don't know how you do it, Anna. How do you not lose your emotions in trial?

ANNA

You can't afford to, Eileen. The law is the law. My job is to enforce the law, not critique it or make it bend to anyone's advantage.

EILEEN

I guess.

ANNA

You start throwing emotion into the law, then there are too many layers to judge. It's easier to cope with working to the letter of the law as it is written.

Agnes to Ida. Both speak loud because their dryers are loud.

AGNES

Nothing like good old-fashioned compassion.

IDA

Young folk don't know compassion like we do.

Anna giggles at their charm. Eileen grins while cutting the last snippets of Anna's hairdo.

Eileen's drunk husband RON (a slovenly man in his sixties) comes in the salon door, slurring his speech.

RON

Woman, you got dinner on?

EILEEN

Friday is pizza night, Ron. It's on the kitchen table. It's cold, so you will have to microwave it.

Ron groans and gives Eileen a lingering glare as he walks to the kitchen.

Agnes and Ida take this as their cue to leave as is: Agnes with curlers in her hair and Ida with perm foil in hers.

AGNES

We'll try this again, sometime.

Ida somewhat mumbles.

IDA

I've got so much foil, you can make a heat shield for NASA.

Agnes and Ida quickly shuffle out the door, waving good-bye to Eileen and Anna. Anna and Eileen speak under their breath while Anna pays for her haircut.

ANNA

You've got to do something about this, Eileen.

EILEEN
You do have emotion!

ANNA
Yeah, when I'm off the clock, I get
that way. You've got my card.

EILEEN
I'll be fine.

RON (O.S.)
Get that lawyer friend of yours
outta here.

EILEEN
She's leaving just now, Ron.

Anna leaves.

EXT. FRONT OF EILEEN'S HOUSE - EVENING

Anna is in her car adjusting her mirror. Agnes and Ida pull out of Eileen's driveway and drive off to their respective homes.

Anna tries to start her car, but it won't start. She notices Eileen pushing Ron out the salon door with a backpack. She looks down and realizes she is out of gas.

ANNA
Ah, shit!

Anna tries her engine one more time. Ron catches eye contact with Anna and starts down the driveway towards her.

Anna jumps out of her car, runs across the street in her stilettos, and heads for an alley to a nearby gas station.

RON
Hey, wait up!

EXT. ALLEY WAY - EVENING

Anna keeps going, but Ron catches up to her.

RON
A young lady shouldn't be walking
in an alley at night, you know.

ANNA
I'm fine, Ron. The gas station is
just there.

Anna books it towards the gas station.

Ron keeps pace and choke holds Anna from behind, bringing her slowly to the ground. He mounts himself on top of her, unfastening his pants.

As he lifts himself up a bit to take her pants off, Anna brings one leg up to put distance between them and jabs his privates with her stiletto heel.

Ron rolls over in agony.

Anna jumps up, takes her shoes off and runs towards the gas station.

Ron pulls her down again, this time by the waist of her pants. The pants come down, underwear and all. This time Ron penetrates her violently, punching her in the eye in the process.

INT. ANNA'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

STEVE, Anna's husband (a physically fit young man in his early thirties) is cuddling Anna, consoling her. Anna is wrapped in a throw, sobbing. She sports a black eye.

ANNA

Gosh, all I wanted was some girl talk and a haircut. Didn't think a rape kit and Plan B would be in the mix.

Steve gives Anna a squeeze, then looks at Anna's eye.

STEVE

Whoa! You don't usually come back with a shiner either. Halloween's passed, babe! What are we gonna do?

ANNA

Ha-ha-ha!

Steve picks up a remote from the coffee table and turns on some romantic instrumental music. He and Anna just sit and day dream for a minute. Anna's expression turns pensive.

STEVE

What are you thinking?

ANNA

If this Plan B doesn't work, that means I'm pregnant! What'll I do?
(MORE)

ANNA (CONT'D)

I can't have that scumbag's baby!
I'd feel so dirty.

STEVE

It'll work, honey. It'll work.
And we'll have him hung by his
balls.

ANNA

Yeah, actually I think he should be
shark bated over the Atlantic. Just
drop him from an airplane.

A few more moments of just the music. Anna rambles.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I never gave abortion much thought,
except that it's against the law.
And I prosecute to the letter of
the law. Case closed. That's my
job.

STEVE

Sometimes I wonder if there is more
to it than that. How is it that
laws based on the same findings can
be so different from State to
State?

ANNA

Hmmm. You've got a point. I never
took the time to ask that. Maybe
that's how career-minded attorneys
move up the ladder -- we just
protect the law at all cost and
close our eyes to where the chips
fall.

STEVE

This isn't going to make you quit
your career, is it? You're a good
attorney. I know I'd want you on
my side.

ANNA

No. I'm just coming to the
revelation that if I was pregnant
with that scumbag's baby, I could
not for the life of me have it!
Does that make me an outlaw to
actually think of having an
abortion in this case?

STEVE

In Alabama, yes. But let me ask you this? Could you raise that scumbag's baby?

ANNA

Oh, God no! That poor kid would be psychologically doomed with my bias. How is that justice?

STEVE

It's not, honey. I feel the same way.

More music passes.

ANNA

I'm thinking I made a major mistake last week.

STEVE

How's that?

ANNA

Under the Chemical Endangerment of a Child Law, I recommended the maximum term of imprisonment for a seventeen-year-old girl who committed her own abortion. I charged her with murder.

STEVE

Oh.

ANNA

She lives in Bay Trees. Everyone knows everyone there. If she kept the baby to term, there would be gossip in school and in her church. If she had an abortion, the same thing. She's a good kid, really. High achiever academically, head cheerleader, high aims of going to college in Hawaii on a full cheer scholarship. And she can't really afford it otherwise.

STEVE

Oh, babe. She can barely take care of herself. How is she going to take care of a baby?

ANNA

Exactly, and what would her mama say about adoption? You know that mama's older daughter and granddaughter live with her. I'm assuming that conversation has come up before.

STEVE

Oh, man! That poor girl. What are you going to do?

ANNA

She can't go to prison just because she has no choice! That makes no sense. I've got to call Christy. I want to be on that girl's defense team. I owe it to her.

Steve gives Anna a squeeze and a kiss.

STEVE

Atta girl!

INT. CHRISTY FEENEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Anna calls Christy to see if she can join the defense team. The phone rings. Christy answers.

INT. ANNA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

CHRISTY

Larrimore Law, this is Christy Feeney. How may I help you?

INTERCUT - CHRISTY'S OFFICE AND ANNA'S OFFICE

ANNA

Christy. It's Anna Baldwin, the prosecution attorney for the Rae Anne Rice case.

CHRISTY

I can't talk to you Anna, you know that. What are you doing?

ANNA

I made a terrible mistake.

CHRISTY

Hind sight is 20/20, isn't it.

ANNA

Christy, I was raped this past Friday.

CHRISTY

Sorry to hear that. And?

ANNA

I did a lot of soul searching. I took the morning after pill. But between you and me, if it does not work, I really think I would have an abortion. I consider myself a law-abiding person, but I know I could not have that rapist's baby. Your client did not have the resources I did because she lives in Bay Trees. Her youth -- and the stigma and trauma -- gave her no choice but to do what she did. After really mulling this over, I realize that it is not the girl who is guilty, it is the system for letting her down. The law made her break the law.

CHRISTY

Damn right! I like the sound of that. But you were so stoic in the courtroom. How do I know I can trust you?

ANNA

I understand. My feelings are sincere. Think it over. I owe this girl big time. Call me.

CHRISTY

I'll see what the family says. You are a tiger on the floor. Maybe they'll see that as an asset.

Anna hangs up the phone. Release intercut.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Rae Anne is fulfilling the college application requirement to volunteer by working at her church's food drive. She is one of a several senior students placing food into paper bags and passing them down a series of long tables, as cars wait their turn to pick up their goods at the front end.

RAE ANNE

Anyone have any more pumpkin up there?

One of the students reaches under the table for a whole case of pumpkin and delivers it to Rae Anne. Rae Anne packs a can of pumpkin into each of the bags in front of her.

Two cars down, a MOTHER is parked with her four to five year old SON in the back. The back window is open. The son points and and speaks loudly in Rae Anne's direction.

SON

Hey, Mama! Isn't that the girl who killed her baby?

MOTHER

Now darlin', we don't talk about such things in public. It's a cryin' shame, it is.

The back window rolls up. The car in front moves on. The Mom moves her car forward while releasing the trunk. Rae Anne takes a bag of groceries and puts it in the lady's trunk herself while every other student volunteer stops and watches. Rae Anne closes the trunk and thumps on it twice to indicate it is OK to move on. In sarcasm/anger, Rae Anne greets them for the holiday.

RAE ANNE

Happy Thanksgiving!

The car drives off. The students look to see that the immediate area is adult free before clapping for Rae Anne. Rae Anne gets back to her place among the tables and continues working.

INT. LAW OFFICE OF CHRISTY FEENEY - DAY

Christy, Anna Baldwin, Rae Anne and Darla are all sitting around a round conference table in Christy's office discussing strategy for relieving Rae Anne of imprisonment.

CHRISTY

Darla, Rae Anne, I assure you that having Anna on our team is a good thing. Her approach is aggressive to what she believes in.

DARLA

But she did recommend imprisonment so strongly. What's changed?
(MORE)

DARLA (CONT'D)

How strong is her belief that Rae Anne is now innocent?

ANNA

Ms. Rice, those are very legitimate questions after my behavior at the arraignment. But something traumatic has happened to me since then that changed my viewpoint on the abortion laws in place.

DARLA

Oh?

ANNA

I was raped.

Darla and Rae Anne gasp in sympathy.

DARLA

Oh my goodness, are you OK?

ANNA

Yes, I am. Thanks for asking. Afterwards, I realized how fortunate I was compared to a teen girl in Bay Trees. I do not live in Bay Trees. I am an adult. There was no stigma for me in getting the morning after pill. No one knew or cared who I was.

RAE ANNE

Lucky you! You heard at the arraignment that my friend's mom works the drug counter at the only drug store in town. And my day after was a Sunday. How was I going to explain to my mother that I suddenly could not go to church as I had every Sunday for a million years?

ANNA

Exactly. Christy, you've got all this? This is great information for her defense.

Christy types notes into her laptop.

CHRISTY

Yes, I have this.

ANNA

Good. Rae Anne, I also came to the realization that I would have to break the law if I was impregnated. Luckily, I was not. I could not raise that scumbag's baby the way it would deserve to be. Talk about endangerment of a child!

Anna looks towards Christy. Christy shakes her head in understanding.

CHRISTY

Hmph.

ANNA

I just never gave it much thought until that awful incident. I now see more clearly that it should be a woman's right to assess what is correct for her and to take action on it to the best of her ability. You performing an abortion because you could not access the morning after pill should not be criminalized. We are going to petition that it is the law, as written, that is forcing you to break it.

RAE ANNE

But I did break it! How do I escape that?

ANNA

On the surface, yes. But Christy and I are going to dissect the laws in your case and show the jury just how inhumane and impractical they are, and how they ignore the science of what a viable pregnancy is.

RAE ANNE

Can that work?

ANNA

I usually get what I work for. Plus, I owe this to you to get you off and running to a great future. It would be a cardinal sin not to.

DARLA

Shall we pray on this?

CHRISTY

Sure.

Darla, Anna, Christy and Rae Anne put their right hands in the middle of the table as if in a huddle.

DARLA

Dear God, our heavenly father . . .

INT. RICE FAMILY LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The living room is highly decorated for the holiday with home made and store-bought decorations from all. Darla, Faith, Rae Anne, Hope and Luna are exchanging gifts while eating cookies and drinking holiday punch.

Luna is the designated Santa Claus. She hands Rae Anne a small package in shiny metallic paper with a bow on top.

LUNA

Auntie Rae, open this one. It's from me!

Rae Anne takes the gift.

RAE ANNE

Thank you, Lunie!

Luna squeals for joy.

LUNA

Eeeeeeeeeeeeh!

Rae Anne opens the gift. It is a box of writing paper in a Hawaiian print and a pen.

RAE ANNE

Oh, wow! Thank you, Luna.

LUNA

It's so you can write me lots of letters when you're at college.

FAITH

Don't be a stranger, brat! I want to live in your shoes. Tell us all your adventures, girl!

HOPE

You guys can do the snail mail, but I get first dibs on FaceTiming.

DARLA
I'd be happy with a quick email
from time to time, between all the
writing and FaceTiming.

RAE ANNE
What about school work?

DARLA
Oh, if you must!

FAITH AND HOPE
Mom!

Faith helps Luna to grab a larger box under the tree. They
bring it to Darla.

FAITH
Mama, this is from me and Luna.

Darla unwraps the box and opens it. She pulls out a
beautiful, somewhat pricy church dress.

DARLA
Oh, my! You can't afford this?

FAITH
You know that saving thing you talk
about? It works!

DARLA
But what do I know? I'm just a
mom!

RAE ANNE
Those church ladies are going to
cry with envy, Mama!

Darla puts it the dress back in the box uncovered. She looks
down at the dress then back up to her girls.

DARLA
Oooh, forgive me Lord, but they are
so right!

Hope grabs her present to Darla from under the tree.

LUNA
Hey! I'm the Santa!

Hope gives the box to Luna.

HOPE
Can you give this box to Memaw?

Luna gives the present to Darla. Darla unwraps and opens it. It is a clutch purse to match the dress.

DARLA

Oh my gosh! I never owned a pretty purse like this! It's so beautiful. How did you. . .?

HOPE

I did that saving thing, too, Mama.

RAE ANNE

Luna, can you get me that silver and pink box under the tree?

LUNA

Sure. In a minute. I gotta take a drink. Being Santa is thirsty work!

Everyone chuckles.

FAITH

You bet, darlin'. From the lips of my child!

Luna takes a sip of her punch, then gets the silver and pink box.

LUNA

Who does this go to?

RAE ANNE

Memaw.

LUNA

Ooh, three presents in a row. You must have been a good girl, Memaw!

Luna gives the box to Darla. Darla unwraps and opens it. It is a fancy church hat that matches the purse and dress.

DARLA

Oh my gosh! A church hat, just like my mama used to wear. It's beautiful.

Darla looks at Rae Anne with the same "how did you get this" look.

HOPE

Don't worry, Mama. Rae Anne stole this.

RAE ANNE

Ha, ha, ha!

DARLA

Luna, I'm going to have Rae Anne get the next gift. It's too heavy for you to carry.

Rae Anne gets up and heads for the tree. She notices a very large package tucked between the couch and the tree.

RAE ANNE

This big one back here?

DARLA

Yes, that's the one.

Rae Anne starts to lift it up. Hope rushes in to help her. They place it standing on the ground. Rae Anne notices the gift tag labeled to her.

RAE ANNE

Oh, this is for me. From y'all.

Rae Anne unwraps the box and sees that it is a set of luggage. She starts to cry and runs into her bedroom. Darla starts after her, then turns around to address her other daughters.

DARLA

Um, let Santa have her Christmas until I get back. We'll finish up after that.

Darla turns back and follows Rae Anne into her room. Rae Anne is crying profusely. Darla closes the door behind her and hugs Rae Anne tight.

RAE ANNE

Mama, thank you for the luggage. I know I'll need it. I just don't know if it is for school or prison.

DARLA

Oh, don't talk like that. You are not going to prison.

RAE ANNE

How can you be so sure?

DARLA

I have faith darlin', I have faith.

Rae Anne backs up a bit to wipe her eyes with her hands.
Darla and she embrace once again.

INT. RICE FAMILY DINING ROOM - EVENING

Rae Anne is celebrating early college acceptance with Gabriela and four other cheerleading friends who applied and received it. All are sitting around the dining room table in their PJ's, taking turns sharing where they got accepted and for what, while eating pizza and drinking soda.

RAE ANNE

Let's go clockwise. Tell us where
and what you are studying. I'll go
last. Gabriela?

GABRIELA

Emory and Duke. Chemistry for
forensic science.

LIZZI (a girl of average cheerleader build with shoulder-length dark, layered hair with long bangs) shares:

LIZZI

University of North Alabama to be
an Occupational Therapy Assistant.

MADDY (a fellow cheerleader a little on the heavier side, with long, red hair in a ponytail) pipes in.

MADDY

My family can't afford a four-year
degree for me, so I'm going to
Itawamba Community College's
Medical Administrative Assistant
program.

SOFIA (a slender physically fit girl with short, black hair in a military cut) reveals her possible destinations.

SOFIA

University of Nebraska and
Southeastern Oklahoma State
University for Aviation. I want to
be a pilot.

CHARLOTTE (a slender physically fit girl with short, light brown hair in a bob) sees that she is next.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, I'm next! Well, Sofia,
depending on which one you choose,
we may be classmates.

(MORE)

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

I also got accepted to U-N-O and Southeastern Oklahoma's aviation programs.

SOFIA

Oh, wow! That's so cool! My first choice is U-N-O. What's yours?

CHARLOTTE

Me, too. See you there. Maybe we can apply to be roomies.

SOFIA

My mom will love it that I already know someone. I didn't know you were interested in flying, too!

GABRIELA

Ok girls, we've got our finale coming up now.

SOFIA AND CHARLOTTE

Oh, sorry. Guess we got carried away.

SOFIA

(To Charlotte)

We'll chat later, girl!

GABRIELA

And now the star of this evening, Rae Anne . . .

ALL THE GIRLS

Are you going to Hawaii?

RAE ANNE

I was accepted. I just have to wait to mid-March to see if I get my scholarship. No scholarship, no go.

LIZZI

There's always Alabama schools.

Rae Anne starts to cry.

ALL THE GIRLS

What's wrong?

RAE ANNE

My abortion is a federal crime in Alabama.

(MORE)

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

I can't go to an Alabama school, or any school for that matter, with a crime on my back. I don't know if I'm really going to college after all.

ALL THE GIRLS

Oh, Rae Anne. So sorry!

INT. ALABAMA CIRCUIT COURTROOM - DAY

Prosecuting attorney, BAILEY GREEN (an equally stern, tough, corporate to Anna in appearance, in her mid- to late thirties) presents her case against Rae Anne to a mostly male jury.

Rae Anne and Darla sit with Christy on the Defense's side of the courtroom.

BAILEY

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, it is my duty to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that 17-year-old Rae Anne Rice knowingly and with intent killed her unborn child in a chemically-induced abortion. Abortion, we all know, is illegal in Alabama; no matter what. And using abortion drugs is in direct violation of the Child Endangerment Law.

JUDGE ELIZABETH DAVENPORT (a woman in her early sixties, who is more open in stature and composure than Judge Helen Gates) pipes in.

JUDGE DAVENPORT

Thank you, Ms. Green. Your first witness?

BAILEY

Your honor, my first witness is Dr. Victoria Cruz.

Dr. Cruz walks up to the witness stand. A bailiff offers a bible for her to swear upon. Dr. Cruz puts her left hand on the bible while raising her right hand.

BAILIFF

Do you solemnly swear that the evidence you shall give to the court shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

DR. CRUZ

I do.

BAILIFF

Please state your name and occupation.

DR. CRUZ

Victoria Alana Cruz, OB/Gyn.

BAILIFF

You may be seated.

Dr. Cruz sits in the stand.

BAILEY

Dr. Cruz, how is it that you know the defendant, Rae Anne Rice?

DR. CRUZ

Well, I've known Rae Anne since she was born.

BAILEY

How long ago was that?

DR. CRUZ

About 17 years ago. She was born in April 2009. My daughter is the same age -- born in August that same year.

BAILEY

And back to my original question: how do you know the defendant?

DR. CRUZ

She lives across the street from me and she is my daughter's best friend.

BAILEY

Were you also treating her for her pregnancy?

DR. CRUZ

Yes.

BAILEY
Ladies and gentlemen of the jury,
I'd like to present Exhibit A.

Bailey holds up the baggy containing the blister pack of misoprostol.

BAILEY (CONT'D)
Ladies and gentlemen of the jury.
This is a blister pack for
misoprostol, the second drug used
in a self-induced abortion. So my
question to you, Dr. Cruz, is did
your treatment include an abortion?

DR. CRUZ
No, it did not.

BAILEY
Please be reminded, Dr. Cruz, that
you are on oath.

DR. CRUZ
Yes, ma'am.

BAILEY
How is it that your fingerprints
are on this blister pack?

DR. CRUZ
I pulled the pack out of the
gymnasium bathroom trash bin when I
found the defendant towards the end
of her abortion.

BAILEY
How is it that you found her?

DR. CRUZ
I was chaperoning the homecoming
dance at the high school. My
daughter found her in the bathroom
and came running out to me for
help.

BAILEY
So you had nothing to do with the
abortion?

DR. CRUZ
Correct.

BAILEY

Now, in your deposition, you said the defendant asked you for an abortion. Is that true?

DR. CRUZ

It is.

BAILEY

In your professional opinion, would you say this was an unwanted pregnancy?

Dr. Cruz looks upset at the line of questioning.

DR. CRUZ

Yes.

BAILEY

Your honor, I am done questioning this witness. My next witness is Dr. Sherri Emmett.

Bailey interrogates Dr. Emmett.

BAILEY (CONT'D)

So Dr. Emmett, how did you come to know that the defendant indeed performed her own abortion?

DR. EMMETT

She told me directly that she did it. She was very honest about it.

BAILEY

Was she of sound mind when she made this confession?

DR. EMMETT

Yes, ma'am.

BAILEY

Not coerced in any way?

DR. EMMETT

No ma'am.

BAILEY

Thank you, Dr. Emmett. That's all we need to know at this point. Your honor, my last witness is the former prosecutor of the defendant, Anna Baldwin.

Bailey interrogates Anna.

BAILEY (CONT'D)

Ms. Baldwin, you were the prosecuting attorney for the defendant at her arraignment, correct?

ANNA

Yes, but . . .

BAILEY

We'll get there, Ms. Baldwin.

Anna looks miffed at being stifled.

BAILEY (CONT'D)

Did you not ask for the stiffest penalty allowed for her crimes of endangering the welfare of a child and committing murder under the Human Life Protection Act?

ANNA

Yes, but . . .

Again, Anna looks miffed at being stifled.

BAILEY

Ms. Baldwin, your references sing praises of you prosecuting the law to its letter, that your judgment is unclouded from extraneous details that may interfere with interpretation of the law and that your prosecution rate is outstanding. So I notice that you are on the defense team for this case.

ANNA

Yes, I am.

BAILEY

Should the jury be lead to think you are flip-flopping? How are we to know where you really stand. Your honor, there seems to be a credibility problem here. May I make a motion to dismiss this witness.

JUDGE DAVENPORT

You may not, Ms. Green. She has contributions to the defense as you noted.

BAILEY

I yield to the defense.

INT. ALABAMA CIRCUIT COURTROOM - NEXT DAY

Christy presents her defense of Rae Anne. She is wearing a sharp navy suit with a light blue blouse and navy pumps. Her suit jacket has pockets, one filled with a small packet of tissue.

JUDGE DAVENPORT

Ms. Feeney, are you ready to present your case?

CHRISTY

Yes, your honor.

JUDGE DAVENPORT

You may proceed.

CHRISTY

Thank you, your honor. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I am going to show you that my client, Rae Anne Rice, had no choice but to perform her own abortion and that she should not be locked up with career murderers for her crime. My teammate, Ms. Baldwin, will help you realize that desperate times do often call for desperate measures -- that if not for the laws as stated, there would be no crime at all here. The laws made my client's action a crime. It was not a crime to begin with. Your honor, my first witness is Officer Cyril Fleming.

Officer Fleming walks up to the witness stand. A bailiff offers a bible for him to swear upon. Officer Fleming puts his left hand on the bible while raising his right hand.

BAILIFF

Do you solemnly swear that the evidence you shall give to the court shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

OFFICER FLEMING

I do.

BAILIFF

Please state your name and occupation.

OFFICER FLEMING

Cyril Fleming, Bay Trees Police Officer.

BAILIFF

You may be seated.

Officer Fleming sits in the stand.

CHRISTY

You were the arresting officer of my client, am I right?

OFFICER FLEMING

Yes, ma'am.

CHRISTY

What were your feelings when you arrested this young girl and subpoenaed her to an arraignment?

OFFICER FLEMING

Officers are trained not to let their feelings interfere with their job, ma'am. I was just doing my job.

CHRISTY

Ah, leaving the emotion quotient free and clear, eh?

JUDGE DAVENPORT

Ms. Feeney, where is this leading?

CHRISTY

Your honor, please indulge me. There is a point.

JUDGE DAVENPORT

I'll yield.

CHRISTY

So Officer, would you say you just go through the motions of your job.

OFFICER FLEMING

I guess so, ma'am.

CHRISTY

Let me ask you this, Officer Fleming. Have you ever done anything in your life that you are not proud of?

OFFICER FLEMING

I think we all have at one time or another, ma'am.

CHRISTY

OK, understood. But have you? I'm asking you.

Officer Fleming scratches his head.

OFFICER FLEMING

Yes, ma'am. I have.

CHRISTY

Care to elaborate?

OFFICER FLEMING

There were some fraternity initiation activities when I was in college.

CHRISTY

Were they illegal?

OFFICER FLEMING

No, ma'am. Just a little weird, that's all.

CHRISTY

So they were not illegal, OK. Do you feel comfortable telling us what some of the activities were?

OFFICER FLEMING

No, ma'am. They're kinda embarrassing.

Christy uses air quotes when she repeats Officer Fleming's answer.

CHRISTY

"Kinda embarrassing." OK, so what if these particular activities became illegal by the implementation of a new law?

OFFICER FLEMING

I'd be up a creek without a paddle, ma'am.

CHRISTY

How so?

OFFICER FLEMING

Well, I'd lose my job. I'd be the laughing stock of my peers. I'd be somewhat ostracized by the guys in the precinct. I'd be in jail! Can't do nothing there!

CHRISTY

What do you mean, nothing?

OFFICER FLEMING

Can't make a living. Can't see my wife and kids. Can't go fishing with my buddies. You know, normal things like that -- just life. I'd have no life!

CHRISTY

So you'd be incarcerated for a crime that was not originally a crime -- something that was maybe embarrassing at most.

OFFICER FLEMING

Well, yes ma'am.

CHRISTY

Thank you, Officer Fleming. You may step down.

Officer Fleming steps down.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

So you see ladies and gentlemen of the jury, Roe v. Wade existed for 50 years to protect a woman's right to make her own decisions about her body, until it was, by a whim, overturned.

(MORE)

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

Like Officer Fleming's embarrassing fraternity initiation activity that was not illegal, so too was Rae Anne's decision to have an abortion. Alabama's choice to overturn Roe v. Wade took Rae Anne's choice away and made her only chance at a good life a crime.

DR. FAHIM JETHA (an East Indian male OB/Gyn from New York City, in his mid- to late 40's, dressed in a suit and tie) testifies next.

DR. JETHA

My name is Fahim Noorali Jetha. I am a practicing OB/Gyn in the State of New York and Editor of the Conception Equity Report, based in New York City.

CHRISTY

So Dr. Jetha, can you define for the ladies and gentlemen of the jury what viability means in regard to the life of a fetus?

DR. JETHA

Certainly. Viability means the point at which the fetus can survive, with or without artificial aid, outside of the uterus.

CHRISTY

In your opinion, Dr. Jetha, when is that?

DR. JETHA

It depends.

CHRISTY

It depends?

DR. JETHA

It depends on whether you are speaking medically or legally and in which State you are speaking.

CHRISTY

Whoa, that's confusing! Can you clear this up for me?

DR. JETHA

Certainly. It is general medical consensus that viability is not until the 23rd or 24th week after gestation, however in 12 states, viability is left to an individual physician's "reasonable medical judgment." Eighteen states have arbitrary viabilities set at 6, 12 or 15 weeks.

CHRISTY

And where does Alabama sit in all this?

DR. JETHA

Alabama follows the general medical consensus.

CHRISTY

Of 23 to 24 weeks.

DR. JETHA

Exactly.

CHRISTY

My client performed her abortion at ten weeks. Would you consider this murder of a viable human being?

DR. JETHA

In my honest opinion, and solely on a medical consensus, I would have to say no.

CHRISTY

Why is it that some states have arbitrary viabilities as you say?

DR. JETHA

States use different criteria for determining viability. Some rely on clinical judgment, while others rely on gestational age and fetal weight and others still, consider if the fetus has lethal anomalies.

CHRISTY

Why is determination of viability not standard across the United States? Rather, is there no science to guide this?

DR. JETHA

It would seem well-intentioned parties took hold of only one factor of viability and ran with it. All the factors I mentioned should be considered collectively.

CHRISTY

So, am I correct in deducing that a woman in Alabama would stand to be convicted for an abortion that would not be illegal in another state?

DR. JETHA

Unfortunately, yes.

CHRISTY

Thank you, Dr. Jetha. You may step down.

Dr. Jetha goes to step down.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

Your honor, my next witness is the defendant, Rae Anne Rice.

Rae Anne is sitting in the witness stand.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, you have heard to this point the ramifications of what could happen when a law is overturned at whim through Officer Fleming's testimony.

You have also heard Dr. Jetha state that general medical consensus defines viability of a fetus to be at 23 to 24 weeks. Please be reminded that my client aborted at 10 weeks.

Now, I have here, my client herself, to discuss the ramifications she has faced since her former pregnancy.

Rae Anne, are you ready?

RAE ANNE

Yes, ma'am.

CHRISTY

Your sexual encounter was with a friend you had since you were three years old, is that right?

RAE ANNE

Yes ma'am.

CHRISTY

It was just something that happened organically with no planning whatsoever, according to your deposition.

RAE ANNE

Yes, ma'am.

CHRISTY

What happened afterwards?

RAE ANNE

I panicked and went home.

CHRISTY

Have you hung out with your friend since?

RAE ANNE

No, ma'am. I see him on the way to school, but we really don't talk anymore.

CHRISTY

Why is that?

RAE ANNE

He and his family just thought we would get married, we'd been together so long. They wanted me to keep the baby. He wanted me to just follow him wherever his future lead him. I want my own life before thinking of settling down.

CHRISTY

So what was your plan?

RAE ANNE

I wanted to do the morning after pill, but I couldn't.

CHRISTY

Why not?

RAE ANNE

Two reasons: 1) the day after was a Sunday. My family always goes to church on Sunday. I hadn't told my mama yet. I did not know how to explain that I needed to go to the pharmacy on a Sunday. The second reason is that there is only one drug store in my town and a friend of mine's mother works the drug counter there. She's a member of our church and I did not want the news to get to mama before I was ready to tell her.

CHRISTY

So what was your option?

RAE ANNE

I had to have an early abortion, so it would not be a crime, or so I thought. I asked Dr. Cruz if she could do it for me.

CHRISTY

And what was her response?

RAE ANNE

She explained that it was illegal for her to perform abortions and that she could not afford to be imprisoned for it. She had my best friend, Gabriela, her two sons and her husband to support.

CHRISTY

So what was your option then?

RAE ANNE

I had to promise to go to maternal care visits with her, but I could not afford to stay pregnant.

CHRISTY

Why is that?

RAE ANNE

My mama cannot afford to send me to college. I have been in cheerleading my whole life. I thought it might be best to capitalize on that to get a scholarship.

(MORE)

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

Some colleges require you to go to their cheer camps before trying out. I couldn't show my optimum skills with a belly sticking out. My balance would be off. I have to go to college. My mama is already taking care of my older sister and my niece.

CHRISTY

So you had the burdens of keeping your pregnancy secret until you could abort, planning out cheer camp tryout events and trying not to be an extra burden on your mother. That's a lot to handle for a 17-year-old girl. How did you manage?

RAE ANNE

Well, with the charge on my back, I was not able to compete for scholarships. It nearly squashed all my dreams of going to college. I can't even go in Alabama!

CHRISTY

But you do have a success story to tell, don't you?

RAE ANNE

Yes, luckily. I was accepted to the Biology program at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

CHRISTY

So you are going all the way to Hawaii! Congratulations! Were you able to get a cheer scholarship from them?

RAE ANNE

I won't know until March or April. They offer a full ride if a video you send in shows skills their cheer team exhibits. I sent them that video at the beginning of the school year, before I was pregnant.

CHRISTY

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I wish to present Rae Anne's achievements so far.

(MORE)

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

She scored a 5, the highest score, on her AP Biology and AP Calculus exams. She is the head cheerleader of her cheer squad at school, volunteers at her church, does clerical work for her mother from home because she also shares care for her niece after school with her younger sister when her mom and older sister are at work. Rae Anne, what do you want to do with your Biology degree?

RAE ANNE

I'd like to apply to medical school after that.

CHRISTY

I've digressed a bit. Let's summarize your ramifications. You juggled the fears of telling your mother, of being tied to an assumptive relationship, of neighborhood gossip spreading, of not being able to go to college to build a life for yourself. Is this about right?

Rae Anne starts to tear up. Christy pulls out a small packet of tissues from her blazer pocket and offers it to her. Rae Anne takes a minute to compose herself and wipes her tears.

RAE ANNE

Yes, ma'am.

CHRISTY

Sounds quite similar to what Officer Fleming would have experienced had they made his unmentionable activity a crime -- fear of telling anyone, being ostracized by gossip, losing his his friends, family, job and life as he knew it. And according to Dr. Jetha's testimony, the determination of your crime is arbitrary at best. Had you performed your abortion before Dobb's, we would not be in this courtroom today. Rae Anne, you may step down now.

RAE ANNE

Thank you.

CHRISTY

My next witness is Attorney Anna Baldwin.

Anna sits in the witness stand.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

Ms. Baldwin, earlier you told the prosecution that you were on the prosecution team at my defendant's arraignment.

ANNA

Yes, I did.

CHRISTY

Prosecuting Attorney. Hmmm, this is a bit ironic.

ANNA

Yes ma'am.

CHRISTY

And as a Prosecuting Attorney, how would you describe your style in upholding the law?

ANNA

I used to pride myself in not getting emotionally involved in my interpretation and subsequent prosecution of the law. I believed the law was the law and that was it. Quite like Officer Fleming.

CHRISTY

What was the spark that changed your mind?

ANNA

Not long after the arraignment, I was raped.

A gasp and general inaudible millings are heard throughout the courtroom. Judge Davenport taps her gavel twice.

JUDGE DAVENPORT

Order!

The courtroom regains decorum quickly.

CHRISTY

I'm so sorry. That must have been scary for you.

ANNA

Yes, it was.

CHRISTY

What about this hideous crime triggered you to join the defense?

ANNA

After my husband and I got back from the hospital, we talked about how fortunate I was that I had unquestioned access to the morning after pill because of my age and station in life. I did not live in the town I got my prescriptions in, so there was no one to fear gossip from. But most of all, we both came to the conclusion that, if the morning after pill did not work, we could not raise the child of a rapist the way it deserved to be. How could I expect any other woman to have a baby conceived by trauma or mistake?

CHRISTY

Hush! You're in Alabama!

Audience giggles in shock over Christy's comment. Anna grins, shyly.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

Again, so how did all this trigger you to join us in the defense.

ANNA

I was almost in her shoes. However, the defendant didn't have the choices I did.

CHRISTY

How's that?

ANNA

Between her responsibilities at home, school and church, she had no time available to seek out the morning after pill. And her actions had to be secretive because of the beliefs in her church, who is her community. Abortion was her only choice. The odds were stacked against her.

(MORE)

ANNA (CONT'D)

I just felt I owed it to her because she worked so hard academically to get to where she is today. I prize education. What would prison do for such a brilliant mind? I feel I have to undo the egregious wrong I have dealt her.

CHRISTY

Thank you, Ms. Baldwin. Your honor, I am going to do something a little different here, if you please.

JUDGE DAVENPORT

And what is that, Ms. Feeney?

CHRISTY

I would like to have Ms. Baldwin make the closing statement.

JUDGE DAVENPORT

Ms. Baldwin, you may proceed with the closing statement.

ANNA

Thank you, your honor.

Anna steps down and walks towards the jury.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I have wronged the defendant, Rae Anne Rice. I recommended imprisonment for up to 99 years for a crime that is only a crime depending on the political party in power over the State at any given time. Please consider these few items when you make your decision on this young girl's life: 1) Alabama concedes that the viability of a fetus is determined at 23 to 24 weeks. The defendant had her abortion at ten weeks. The fetus could not have survived outside the womb, with or without aid -- no matter what State you live in. 2) Alabama law prohibits any medical personnel to help perform a safe abortion, unless the mother is at risk of passing away without one.

(MORE)

ANNA (CONT'D)

The defendant had no choice but to perform her own abortion. 3) Not only the law, but the defendant's community beliefs forced the defendant to act in secrecy. 4) The defendant is an academically bright, young girl who made a stupid mistake in a brief moment of passion. She knew how to cancel the pregnancy before it really started, but did not have the time or the private access. She is her senior class's Valedictorian. She has the academic scores to go into any profession she so chooses and to soar. She has balanced her studious behavior with the responsibility of caring for her niece while her mom and older sister work opposing shifts. That's getting meals on the table, getting her niece bathed and ready for bed, etc. She has tried to be a good example for her younger sister. On top of all this, she worked her way up to head cheerleader by her senior year of high school. Is it productive, rewarding or even honorable to confine such a person to share space with hardened criminals for the rest of her life? And 5) Does the defendant pose a threat to herself and others?

Anna looks over to Christy to indicate she is done.

CHRISTY

The defense rests, your Honor.

Rae Anne and Darla let out a gulp and tears.

JUDGE DAVENPORT

Court will adjourn for today. The jury will be directed to the Deliberation Room. Court will re-adjourn tomorrow at 1:00 pm for a verdict and determination of sentencing.

INT. CHRISTY FEENEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Christy, Anna, Darla and Rae Anne discuss their feelings on the trial.

CHRISTY

Darla, Rae Anne, how do you think it went?

DARLA

Well, I like the way you summarized periodically to keep the jury with you and how Anna narrowed it down to just five points to consider. Hopefully, that makes the right decision easier.

RAE ANNE

But it still doesn't take away the fact that I did the act. I performed my own abortion.

ANNA

Slow down, Rae Anne. In Alabama, abortion is made illegal through the Human Life Protection Act, but you had no viable life to protect yet. You were only ten weeks along.

Christy opens a large paperback to a page marked with a post-it note.

CHRISTY

Look here in Dr. Jetha's study. He states that Alabama has tried to convict women of murder even when the life was not viable. When unsuccessful, they prosecute what they believe to be a violation of the Child Endangerment Act to get that murder charge to stick. They reason that mifepristone and misoprostol are drugs used to kill the fetus.

RAE ANNE

Well, I used those.

ANNA

But you can't kill something that can't live. Let's think of it in Biology terms. You're into Biology, right?

RAE ANNE

Yeah.

ANNA

Say you have a fledgling plant in a pot. Let's call that the fertilized egg in your womb that has not reached viability yet.

RAE ANNE

OK.

ANNA

The plant is weak. It's not doing anything except sprouting a leaf, then losing it over and over again, despite your care for it. So the plant is not viable and you want to get rid of it. You throw it away. Did you kill it?

RAE ANNE

Well no; it wasn't going to go anywhere. But the life in my womb could have flourished if I let it.

DARLA

Honey, I know I've shown my disapproval of abortion when Faith was pregnant. I don't think it should be a form of birth control, but Dr. Jetha's study has opened my eyes a bit. There are many reasons women should get an abortion, though -- rape, like in Ms. Anna's case; youth, as in your case. You can't take care of a baby! Faith barely can! Women have abortions when they find themselves pregnant in abusive marriages they are trying to leave. The expense of caring for another mouth to feed precludes them from leaving. Remember my Aunt Jane up North? She had to have several abortions because she had a double uterus. She'd find her uteri in different stages of pregnancy and have to decide which fetus to spare for the life of the other or herself. All these reasons, including yours, are legitimate reasons to abort. If done before viability, it is not murder.

ANNA

The life in the wombs of any of these women would have flourished if allowed to, but to what end?

DARLA

Your future is no less important here. Everyone deserves a future. Even you.

Rae Anne snuffles and gives a small chuckle.

CHRISTY

Feeling any better?

RAE ANNE

I guess. I don't know. I guess I understand that I can't kill something that is not viable, so maybe I didn't commit murder. But why do I feel so bad? I feel selfish for wanting a future. It's not like I was in any danger, like in the other cases you described.

DARLA

Oh yes you were. What would you have done if you had to stay here?

RAE ANNE

Guess I could always work in the plant like everyone else.

DARLA

And how happy would you be there?

RAE ANNE

(Sarcastically)

I'd be rolling in happiness, Mama.

DARLA

Yeah, that's what I thought. Trevor's coming back after college to help run his daddy's business. What do you say to that?

RAE ANNE

Talk about depressing news, Mama! Ew! I'd die.

DARLA

Me, too, to see you so sad. Depression kills, Rae Anne.

(MORE)

DARLA (CONT'D)
 So don't tell me your future
 doesn't matter.

Christy has to leave. She gets up and puts a binder into her
 briefcase.

CHRISTY
 OK, I'm sorry I have to leave now.
 I've got another meeting. So to
 make you feel better before I go,
 let's summarize.
 1) You are not guilty of murder of
 something that couldn't survive
 anyway.
 2) You wanting a future is not
 selfish. It is self-preservation.
 3) Go Hawaii! Ooh!

Christy hugs Rae Anne.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)
 Fill the night with something
 relaxing. I'll see you tomorrow.

Christy shakes Darla's hand across the table.

DARLA
 Thank you for your help. I'm
 crossing my fingers.

Darla and Rae Anne leave the office, shutting the door behind
 them.

Christy hugs Anna.

CHRISTY
 Thank you for all your hard work.
 I wish you the best of luck when
 this is all over.

ANNA
 Thanks, Christy. Steve and I are
 looking forward to the move to
 Boston.

CHRISTY
 Keep in touch.

ANNA
 Will do, my friend. Thank you for
 opening my eyes.

INT. RICE FAMILY KITCHEN/DINING/LIVING AREA - EVENING

Darla, Rae Anne, Hope, Faith and Luna are getting up from the dinner table. Darla runs to her bedroom just off the kitchen. Faith helps Luna out of her booster chair. Rae Anne and Hope start to bring their plates to the kitchen. Darla comes running out of her bedroom with adult coloring books, packs of colored pencils for her and her girls and a child's coloring book and crayons for Luna.

DARLA

Don't worry about the dishes tonight. Go sit in the living room.

FAITH

Mama! You know the church frowns upon leaving work undone before going to play.

DARLA

Oh, go on! The church don't need to know about our private family affairs.

HOPE

Oh, Mama! You're getting radicalized.

RAE ANNE

Hope! Respect!

Luna spots the coloring books.

LUNA

Ooh, Memaw! You bought me a coloring book?

Darla passes out the coloring books and packs of colored pencils and crayons.

DARLA

Yes, honey. I bought one for everyone. I want us to pick a page and take our time with coloring. There's a lot of details in these books. Just let yourself roll with your imagination.

HOPE

Mama's getting in touch with her inner hippie.

LUNA
What's an innew wippee?

All laugh at the innocent mispronunciation.

HOPE
Faith, this is your baby. I just deliver the lines. I don't have to explain them. Tell Luna what an innew wippee is.

FAITH
Thanks, kiddo.

LUNA
What it is, Mama?

FAITH
I gotta think about that one, Luna.
I'll tell you later.

LUNA
You do a lot of thinking, Mama.

All snicker.

Rae Anne appreciates that her mother has created this time for her to relax.

RAE ANNE
Thanks, Mama.

Everyone starts to concentrate on their coloring.

INT. DARLA'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Darla's last attempt to bolster Rae Anne's confidence.

Darla and Rae Anne are sitting on the edge of Darla's bed in their nightgowns. Rae Anne is crying in Darla's arms.

RAE ANNE
Mama, I'm scared to go to sleep.

DARLA
Scared to go to sleep? Why?

RAE ANNE
I'm afraid to wake up and find myself already in prison.

DARLA

You don't know that you are going there.

RAE ANNE

But what if I do, Mama? I feel like I've wasted time wallowing in self-pity all this time and not telling y'all how much you mean to me. If I go to prison, how many times am I going to be able to tell y'all that?

DARLA

Aw, honey. We all know you love us. Faith appreciates the banter between you. Hope will appreciate you setting her straight when she is a little older. And Luna thinks you are the best auntie ever!

RAE ANNE

I want to continue that love, Mama. Over time, how are y'all gonna know?

DARLA

It's not like we would abandon you. Do you think I would not see you every time I got the chance? Do you think we wouldn't appeal?

RAE ANNE

Can you afford that?

DARLA

You leave the finances and time management to me. God has his way of providing.

RAE ANNE

Do you think I will be found guilty?

DARLA

Do you remember how hard Christy and Anna fought to get an educated jury?

RAE ANNE

Yes.

DARLA

It was because they wanted jurors who were open to internal debate in their minds. Who appreciated learning.

RAE ANNE

But I had an abortion! Abortion is illegal in Alabama.

DARLA

You had a miscarriage; not an abortion.

RAE ANNE

But I made it happen. I can't stop thinking that.

DARLA

You had a miscarriage of something that was not even a life yet. An abortion is killing a life.

RAE ANNE

Alabama doesn't seem to see it that way.

DARLA

That's why Christy got that Dr. Jetha to show how arbitrary the definition of life is across the nation. And that the definition was not necessarily based on science. Why should you get imprisoned for something that hasn't been clearly defined?

RAE ANNE

What about that Child Endangerment Act? I used those drugs to start the abortion . . .

DARLA

Miscarriage.

RAE ANNE

Miscarriage going.

DARLA

I read a little about that act. The act was initially meant to protect the viable fetus from pregnant women who were on meth-amphetamines.

RAE ANNE

Initially. So now they apply it to mife and miso as well. Oh, this is confusing.

DARLA

Exactly, that is why Christy and Anna summarized the real points for the jury to address. The first three points explained the facts of the case quite concisely. And the last two hit their core of parental guilt.

RAE ANNE

What do you mean? I don't remember those points.

DARLA

Asking the jury if they would find it productive, rewarding or honorable to have someone with all your high credentials incarcerated with hardened criminals. What parent could commit their child if they were like you?

Rae Anne half smiles.

RAE ANNE

Thanks, Mama.

DARLA

And the last point was a no-brainer. Are you a danger to yourself or others? Are you? What are you gonna do? Hit me with your pom pom?

Rae Anne gives Darla a big hug.

RAE ANNE

Mama, I love you.

DARLA

I love you, too. Now we need to get some sleep. We've got a big day tomorrow.

RAE ANNE

Yeah, I'll say. I don't ever want this kind of day again!

Rae Anne starts to cry again.

DARLA

Do you want to sleep with your Mama tonight?

RAE ANNE

Could I?

DARLA

Sure honey.

Darla and Rae Anne crawl into Darla's bed. They turn their respective lamps off.

INT. ALABAMA CIRCUIT COURTROOM - DAY

Everyone is seated in the courtroom, awaiting the verdict and sentencing. Rae Anne is sitting between Darla and Christy. Judge Davenport is just entering. The bailiff is front and center.

BAILIFF

All rise. Judge Elizabeth Davenport presiding.

Everyone complies.

JUDGE DAVENPORT

Please be seated.

Everyone sits. Judge Davenport turns to address the jury.

JUDGE DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

Members of the jury, have you reached a verdict?

The JURY FOREPERSON (a clean-cut man in his late 40's or early 50's, dressed in business casual, with a blazer over a T-shirt) stands to address the judge.

JURY FOREPERSON

Yes we have, your Honor.

JUDGE DAVENPORT

Please hand the verdict form to the bailiff.

The bailiff moves towards the jury foreperson to retrieve the verdict form. Once retrieved, he then takes it to the judge.

Darla, Rae Anne and Christy hold hands. Rae Anne bites her lip in fear.

JUDGE DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

The State of Alabama versus Rae Anne Rice. We, the jury, find the defendant not guilty of the offense of Class A murder of an unborn child. We, the jury, find the defendant not guilty of the offense of chemically endangering an unborn child.

Judge Davenport looks up to address Rae Anne.

JUDGE DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

Congratulations, Miss Rice! You are free to go.

Rae Anne cries hard in relief.

RAE ANNE

Thank you!

Judge Davenport addresses the whole courtroom.

JUDGE DAVENPORT

I formally accept this verdict and will order the clerk to record it as the judgment of the court. I dismiss the jury with gratitude for your service.

The jury files out a side exit door. Christy, Anna, Darla and Rae Anne jump into an embrace in the aisle with happy tears as the prosecution team leaves the courtroom.

EXT. MAILBOX OUTSIDE THE RICE HOME - DAY

Rae Anne checks the mail after walking home from school. She finds an envelope from the Financial Aid Office of University of Hawaii - Manoa. She opens it and displays look of excitement across her face as she reads it.

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII (V.O.)

Congratulations, Rae Anne Rice! We are pleased to accept you into our cheerleading team at University of Hawaii - Manoa Campus. We are offering you the full ride scholarship to pursue your studies in our Bachelor of Science in Biology program. Please fill out the attached form to claim your award and spot on the team by . . .

Rae Anne screams with joy and jumps up and down, then to the front door.

INT. KITCHEN/DINING/LIVING AREA - DAY

Rae Anne plops herself down on the living room couch, still holding the letter. Darla and Faith are home with Luna.

DARLA

Wow! What's up little girl?

LUNA

What up, Auntie Rae?

FAITH

I haven't seen you this happy in a long time, girl! What gives?

RAE ANNE

I got the full ride to University of Hawaii!

Darla looks up with hands folded in the air, while rushing to meet Rae Anne. Faith rushes to her as well, crying happy tears.

DARLA

Oh thank you, Jesus! You answered my prayers.

Rae Anne stands up to hug them both.

RAE ANNE

I'm going to college! I'm going to college!

Luna, dressed in a dress with a full skirt to it, twirls idly in a circle, fascinated by how her dress flares out as she spins.

FAITH AND LUNA

Yay!

DARLA

Yes, you are! Oh my goodness! I am so proud of you!

Hope comes in the front door. Rae Anne and Darla break their embrace.

HOPE

Oh my gosh, you got the scholarship didn't you!

RAE ANNE

Yeah, I did!

Hope walks towards Rae Anne, Darla and Faith to join their embrace.

HOPE

Oh, I'm so happy for you! I'm gonna miss you, but I'll be bragging on you about how you're going to school in Hawaii the whole time you're gone.

FAITH

Oh God, I'm so worked up, I can't talk. I am so happy for you, Rae. What a life you're going to have!

RAE ANNE

I've gotta send a thank you note to Christy to let her know. Thank God for Christy!

EXT. RAE ANNE AND GABRIELA'S STREET - DAY

Rae Anne and Gabriela wear formal church dresses and dressy cowgirl boots. It is their senior prom block party.

Rae Anne and Gabriela step down from their front porches, run to each other and put an arm around the other's waist. They stop to look about a couple residential blocks down the road. They see their band of about three dozen musicians in uniform waiting at the end of the road. The senior class of fifty students is lined up behind them, mostly out of sight for now. Houses on both sides along the entire street have tables of food and drink from local restaurants, yard game set ups and photo shoot settings, giving a community feel. Trevor's house, closest to where the band is standing, has a table to pass out yearbooks. At one end of the table is a wrapped ukulele case.

Rae Anne and Gabriela run to take their place behind the band, passing the last street sign which has temporarily been changed to read, "Prom Street."

FROM THE LOUDSPEAKER (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen, we present
the senior class of Bay Trees High
School, 2026!

The band and band instructor proceed down the street. The senior class follows behind with smiles on their faces, in rhythm to the music.

Family members line the street to cheer on the graduating class. The band and the senior class go all the way to the opposite end of the street, where there is an intersection blocked off for a dance floor and an area for the band to be seated while they play.

Show a happy montage of Rae Anne and Gabriela doing a country line dance with their class in the dance area, trying their hands out at corn hole, eating enchiladas on Gabriela's front lawn, posing on a tractor and hay bail on Rae Anne's front lawn, getting their yearbook's signed by fellow classmates as they progress back up the street.

Trevor looks on from his table in sadness. He grabs his yearbook and the ukulele case, puts a closed sign on his table, and walks towards Rae Anne. Rae Anne and Gabriela notice him.

GABRIELA

Do you want me to stay?

RAE ANNE

No, I'll be OK. Thanks.

Gabriela goes down the street further to mingle with others.

TREVOR

Rae Anne?

RAE ANNE

Yes, Trevor.

TREVOR

I've been wanting to say that I am so sorry for what I did, for so long. I just couldn't muster up the courage.

RAE ANNE

It's OK, Trevor.

TREVOR

It really isn't. I was a jerk to expect you to give up your dreams for me. I took you for granted. We were so close for so long. I just assumed we were it for good.

RAE ANNE

That assuming thing is easy for us because we're so young. We don't know any better yet.

(MORE)

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

We don't have the experience yet to know that life will change at certain points in our lives. And we don't always change in the same direction.

TREVOR

Wow! You sound all grown up!

RAE ANNE

I had a lot of time to think when I was on that wretched ankle bracelet.

Running out of words to say, Trevor presents the ukulele.

TREVOR

Well, I should mingle. Oh, this is for you.

RAE ANNE

You didn't have to buy me a gift, Trevor.

TREVOR

I wanted to. I think you might like it in your room at school.

RAE ANNE

Oh. Shall I open it?

TREVOR

Yes, please.

Rae Anne opens it and begins to laugh. Inside, with the ukulele, is a Dollar Tree lei and a card that reads, "Aloha with love, or at least fond admiration, Trevor." Rae Anne gives Trevor a hug and a kiss on his cheek.

RAE ANNE

Oh, this is so perfect! This will definitely be part of my decor! No one would think a girl from Alabama would have a real ukulele.

TREVOR

Well, bye now. Good luck.

Rae Anne grabs Trevor's arm.

RAE ANNE

Trevor, your Mrs. Right will be at UNA, looking for her M R S degree.

TREVOR

I hope she's as good a friend as you.

RAE ANNE

She's not Mrs. Right if she's not. Don't settle for less. You've got time.

TREVOR

Thanks. So long.

Rae Anne closes up the ukulele and holds it to her chest as she walks it home. She has a beautiful, wide smile of relief and closure on her face.

EXT. BAY TREES HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Commencement speech.

RAE ANNE

Good afternoon faculty, families, friends, and most importantly, the Class of 2026!

Crowd cheers! Rae Anne waits until the noise settles.

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

When we were little, people used to ask us what we wanted to be someday. And back then, the answers came easy: teacher, nurse, farmer, factory worker, coach, singer, lawyer, a mom, a dad. Somebody important. Somebody who mattered.

At 18 years old, I think most of us have learned that the harder question is not what we want to be. It's what we do when life doesn't go according to plan.

FEMALE GRADUATE 1

She's going to use her abortion in her speech.

FEMALE GRADUATE 2

Shush! This could be interesting.

RAE ANNE

Because somewhere between kindergarten and graduation, every single one of us discovered something nobody really prepares you for: sometimes life gets heavy before you feel ready to carry it. Sometimes the road you imagined for yourself suddenly changes. Sometimes people disappoint you. Sometimes systems disappoint you. Sometimes you lose privacy, confidence, friendships, certainty, or the feeling that the future belongs to you.

MALE GRADUATE 1

Sounds foreboding.

TREVOR

Let her get to her point.

RAE ANNE

And sometimes you wake up one morning convinced that every door ahead of you has closed. But I stand here tonight to tell you something I hope you never forget: Despair is a liar!

Audience claps, hoots and hollers in support.

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

It tells you there are no options when there may still be one more phone call to make. One more application to send. One more person willing to help. One more scholarship. One more prayer. One more morning to try again. Dreams do not always survive because life is easy. Sometimes they survive because people refuse to quit looking for a way forward. I know many of us sitting here tonight come from families that sacrificed quietly for us. Parents who worked double shifts. Grandparents who stepped in when they didn't have to. Older siblings who gave up opportunities so younger ones could have them. Teachers who bought supplies out of their own pockets.

(MORE)

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

Coaches who drove us home after practice because they knew we needed support more than discipline.

Show Ms. Easton, the cheer squad coach videotaping the commencement, wiping an eye while taping.

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

None of us got here alone.
And because of that, I want to say something especially to the people in this graduating class who feel behind, ashamed, overwhelmed or afraid of what comes next:
Do not decide your future based on your worst moment.
Do not let embarrassment become your destiny.
Do not confuse being judged with being known.

Show Darla sitting between Faith and Hope, wiping her tears with a tissue, feeling the last two lines particularly applicable. Luna is on Faith's lap.

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

People will form opinions about your life without understanding your circumstances. Some people will talk about you before they ever talk to you. Some people will reduce your entire story to a single chapter.
Let them.

SEVERAL STUDENTS IN AUDIENCE

Go, Rae!

RAE ANNE

Because the truth is, human beings are more complicated than rumors, headlines, mistakes, tragedies or painful seasons.
And no matter what has happened to you, there is still a future waiting that deserves your effort.
You still apply for the scholarship.
You still ask questions.
You still knock on doors.
You still advocate for yourself.
You still get up in the morning and keep moving.

(MORE)

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

Especially then.
I think courage is often
misunderstood. We picture courage
as fearlessness. But most real
courage happens quietly. It looks
like showing up to school when you
know people are whispering about
you.

Two girls share looks of admission of guilt to the last line.

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

It looks like asking for help when
your pride begs you not to. It
looks like choosing hope after
disappointment. It looks like
continuing forward while your life
feels uncertain.
Sometimes courage is simply
refusing to disappear.

Hope straightens herself up in her chair with a look of pride
in her sister.

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

Tonight, we celebrate achievement,
and we should. This class has
worked hard. We earned these
diplomas. But I hope we leave here
understanding that success is not
just measured by awards, grades or
trophies.
Sometimes success is surviving long
enough to finally see better days
arrive.
And they do arrive. Maybe not
quickly. Maybe not fairly. Maybe
not without scars. But they come.
I don't know exactly where all of
us will be five years from now.
Some of us will stay close to home.
Some will leave Alabama and never
look back. Some will build
businesses. Some will raise
families. Some will fail at things
before finding what they were meant
to do.
But I hope wherever life takes us,
we remember this:
There is almost always another path
forward, even when you cannot yet
see it.
Keep searching for it. Ask for
help. Take the opportunity.

(MORE)

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

Fill out the form. Make the call.
Tell the truth. Lean on people who
love you. Have faith . . .

Rae Anne looks directly at her sister, Faith. Faith modestly smiles. The crowd laughs.

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

I always have Faith, no pun
intended, that one difficult season
does not get the final say over
your life.
And if you ever find yourself at a
moment where the future feels
impossible, I hope you remember a
classroom full of people who once
sat beside you, just as uncertain
and hope . . .

Rae Anne looks directly at her sister, Hope. Hope snorts a laugh in disbelief that her name actually fit into Rae Anne's speech. The crowd laughs again.

RAE ANNE (CONT'D)

And hopeful as you are now. Hope,
I'll always have you.
We made it together.
And I believe we are capable of
making it farther than we ever
imagined.
Congratulations, Class of 2026!
Thank you.

Whole class and audience stand up, clap and cheer.

INT. DORM ROOM AT UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII, MANOA - DAY

Rae Anne's room is completely set up. Her bed is dressed with Hawaiian comforter, sheets and pillowcase. Her ukulele is centered prominently on the wall, just over the side of her bed. Her side window at the end of her bed has matching Hawaiian curtains. Her laptop and desk paraphernalia are on her desk. Knick knacks are on top of the desk hutch. A backpack is strapped over her desk chair. Her armoire is open to reveal an organized closet of clothes and luggage, including a muumuu. A tall, closed hamper is tucked between the armoire and the wall. A folder is on top of the three-drawer unit at the far end of the room.

Rae Anne, Darla, Faith, Hope and Luna all stand in a row, arm in arm, to admire the room they helped set up.

RAE ANNE

This room is beautiful. Thanks guys! I can't wait to start school!

FAITH

I'm so excited for you, Rae. You deserve this.

HOPE

I wanna do this!

LUNA

Me, too. Can I go with you, Auntie Hope?

Everyone smiles at Luna's cuteness.

DARLA

Dream on, girl! I like what I'm hearing. You get the funds, I'll be happy to settle you in.

HOPE

OK, I want to go to school in New Zealand!

DARLA

Don't go pushin' it now. Hawaii is far enough.

Everyone breaks arms. Rae Anne goes to pick up the folder on the dresser at the far end of the room. She opens it up.

RAE ANNE

Glad I picked this up. Looks like I have a mandatory dormitory meeting in half an hour.

DARLA

OK, that looks like our cue to go. Come here, baby girl.

Rae Anne and Darla hug tight. Darla lets out a gasp and cries hard. Rae Anne follows suit. Faith and Hope close in for a huddle, teary-eyed. Luna, on the side lines, starts to cry.

LUNA

Mama, why are we all crying?

The huddle breaks. Faith picks up Luna and goes through the door. Rae Anne holds the door open for Hope and Darla.

DARLA

Don't be a stranger now. Call me
at least once a week.

Darla gives Rae Anne a quick kiss on the cheek.

RAE ANNE

I will, Mama. I promise.

FAITH

Yeah, don't make us come after you!

HOPE

We might have to go to the beach
first, but we'd come after you.

RAE ANNE

I love you guys! Take care. I'll
miss you.

Rae Anne closes the door and stands against it with a smile
then tears of victory and relief on her face.

FADE OUT.