

T H E B U R N I N G W O M A N

written by Brad Ingelsby

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FADE IN:

EXT. ASTON, PENNSYLVANIA -- VARIOUS ANGLES -- WINTER NIGHT

A middle-class, blue-collar suburb outside Philadelphia.

In WIDE EXTERIOR SHOTS we see:

CONCHESTER BOWLING ALLEY. A KMART. A PATHMARK grocery store. Their parking lots filled with American-made cars.

COCO'S PIZZERIA. Families cram into vinyl booths eating pizza, Herr's potato chips, and cheesesteaks.

O'FLAGHERTY'S PUB. A MAN and a WOMAN make-out against his pick-up truck. His hands are buried in her back pockets.

SUN VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL. A football game is played under the lights.

EXT. 142 LAMP POST LANE -- DEB'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

A modest split-level Colonial built in the 1960s. A Dodge Spirit and a Ford Escort are parked in the crumbling drive. The sidewalks are flanked by crusted, weeks-old mounds of snow. Two yellow lights glow in the upstairs bedroom windows. One bright, the other dim.

SUPER: **2003**

The dim light grows dimmer and dimmer until it goes dark.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM -- DEB'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON A CLOCK RADIO: **7:27 PM.** *Cyndi Lauper's 'Time After Time'* plays as WE PAN AROUND THE ROOM. The decor hasn't been updated since the 80s. Floral balloon valances, turquoise carpet, and a wooden JcPenney bedroom set.

Atop the dresser are stacks of paperback romance novels, souvenir shot glasses from Sea Isle City, New Jersey, a plastic ashtray filled with Parliament Light butts, and a six-pack of Miller Lite cans.

Continuing along, picture frames hang on the wall. Sears portrait studio photographs of a mother, DEB, and her daughter, BRIDGET, over the years. From rompers to overalls to braces and crimped hair. In the most recent photo Bridget holds a baby boy in her arms.

Finally we arrive at the bathroom door. Inside, DEB CONNOR, 32, trim, attractive, stands before the mirror applying mascara as she sings along to the music. She's dressed in a blouse, a too-short miniskirt and knee-high leather boots.

She's reckless, petulant, impulsive: more girl than woman. Her sister believes she drinks too much. It's the smoking that concerns her mother. She had Bridget at sixteen-years-old and her life since has been a series of bad decisions, dead-end jobs and dead-end men. And yet she's unreasonably hopeful that one man -- one great romance -- could change it all. A Prince Charming could rescue her from the doldrums of her blue-collar existence and transport her to that drugstore romance novel denouement she so desperately believes exists.

DEB

Bridg? Bridget?

Deb exits the bathroom, cracks open a can of beer and takes a swig. She calls into the hallway now --

DEB (CONT'D)

Bridg, can you come in here? I need your help with something.

Moments later, BRIDGET, 17, enters in a *Sun Valley HS* t-shirt and sweatpants. She was prettier and slimmer in the pictures. Happier, too. Much of that change can be attributed to the fact that she's a mother now: chronically sleep-deprived and overwhelmed. She quietly closes the door behind her.

DEB (CONT'D)

Which boots do you like?

BRIDGET

(whispers)

Sshh. I finally got him down.

Bridget turns the volume down on the clock radio, then belly-flops onto the bed, wiped.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

I think he's cuttin' another tooth.
Keeps gnawin' on his pacifier.

DEB

Which boots? Hurry up, Brett's gonna be here.

Bridget props her head up on her hands, considers the boots on Deb's feet: one brown, one black.

BRIDGET

Black.

DEB

Really? I was kinda thinkin' the brown.

BRIDGET

I don't like the brown. Too many straps goin' on or something.

DEB

Really?

BRIDGET

Yes, really. Geez.

DEB

I like all the straps. Gives it a little something extra.

Bridget rolls her eyes: *then why'd you ask in the first place?* Deb flicks the black boot off, slips on another brown. She poses before the floor mirror, analyzing every curve.

BRIDGET

Know what really stinks? How all my friends were like, '*Nothin's gonna change when the baby comes. We're all still gonna be best friends.*' And now J's here and everything's totally changed. Kelly and Jenna have been pretty good, I guess, but the other ones act like I don't exist anymore.

DEB

Well, you're a mom now, baby. You're livin' two totally different lives. That's why I told you not to let Dipshit convince you he didn't need to wear a condom.

BRIDGET

Can you stop calling him that?

DEB

Well he's earned it.

BRIDGET

I don't care if he earned it. It's annoying... It's just, I never see anyone anymore. It's like I'm trapped in this cage all the time.

DEB
 (only half-joking)
 Get used to it. I've been trapped
 in this cage for thirty-two years.

The thought depresses Bridget. Deb grabs the pack of
 Parliaments off the dresser. Lights one, plops down in a
 chair in the corner and opens the window a crack.

BRIDGET
 So where's he taking you?

DEB
 Some new restaurant over in Media.
 La Rusticana or La Rustica or --

BRIDGET
 Ohhhh. Sounds fancy.

DEB
 Well I'm a fancy girl. Don't expect
 to buy me a hamburger and get a
 look at the goods.

BRIDGET
 Ewww. The goods?

Deb pushes up her breasts: *these goods*. Bridget playfully
 tosses a pillow at Deb. Deb tosses it back. Bridget LAUGHS. A
 few moments pass as Deb smokes and sings along to the music.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)
 I feel fat. All I ever wear anymore
 are baggy shirts and sweatpants.

DEB
 You're not fat, sweetie. You're
 just in a rut. It's the time a
 year. When it's cold like this you
 just feel crappy about everything.

BRIDGET
 I looked in the mirror when I was
 gettin' in the shower the other day
 and was like seriously grossed-out.

DEB
 Know how much weight I gained when
 I had you? 45 pounds.

BRIDGET
 Are you serious?

DEB

I had this crazy craving all the time. There was this place out on 352 called Wagon Wheel. It's not there anymore, but it was this big Sizzler-type-place. And every night my friend Karen Giarusso would pick me up when she got off'a work and we'd drive over to Wagon Wheel so I could get the spicy meatballs.

BRIDGET

Spicy meatballs?

DEB

And I'd eat two plates -- and I mean two super-sized like mountain of food plates -- of spicy meatballs over egg noodles.

BRIDGET

Ewww!

DEB

And I'd top it all off with sour cream.

BRIDGET

(kicking her feet up and down as if grossed-out)
Ewww eww eww eww eww! That sounds like the grossest thing ever.

DEB

Took me two years to get back to my original weight. So stop feelin' sorry for yourself.

BRIDGET

(sighs)
I just want everything to go back to the way it was.

DEB

It never goes back to the way it was. You make do with what's left.

A KNOCK is heard downstairs.

DEB (CONT'D)

Shit, that's him.

Deb pops up, stands before the mirror and gives herself a final once-over.

DEB (CONT'D)
Whaddaya think?

BRIDGET
You look pretty.

DEB
Just pretty? Not drop-dead or
stunning or beautiful...?

BRIDGET
You look drop-dead and stunning and
beautiful.

Deb gulps down the rest of her Miller Lite then bends down
and kisses Bridget on the forehead.

DEB
Love ya, sweetie.

BRIDGET
Love you, too, mom.

Deb goes. We stay with Bridget as she listens to Deb bound
down the stairs and open the front door --

DEB (O.C.)
Well don't you look handsome.

The door closes. In the lonely silence that follows, Bridget
gazes around her mother's bedroom. It's a mess. The remnants
of outfit changes litter the floor and the cigarette's still
burning in the ashtray. She shakes her head knowingly, then
rolls off the bed. She stubs out the cigarette, stuffs the
clothes in a drawer, shuts off the radio, then exits.

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT -- MEDIA, PA -- NIGHT

Quaint. Dimly lit. One bottle of red wine is empty and
another's on its way. Deb sits across from BRETT TOBECK, 40,
a former local football hero struggling through a midlife
crisis and a receding hairline.

BRETT
How's the ravioli?

DEB
If you weren't sitting right there
I'd be licking my plate.

BRETT

(smiles, then)

Sorry it's taken so long to get together. The wife's parents extended their trip. You don't know how badly I wanted to bust outta that house and come see you.

DEB

What, the phone sex wasn't enough?

BRETT

Not even close. It only made me want the real thing even worse.

Brett refills Deb's wine glass, then slips a brochure from his jacket and offers it to her. She glances at it: *Skytop Lodge*, a rustic, secluded resort in the Pocono Mountains.

BRETT (CONT'D)

I told the wife I had a conference in Hartford next month. Three nights, four days. What do you think?

DEB

I think I wish it was next month.

BRETT

That's not all I got.

INT. BEST WESTERN HOTEL -- CONCORDVILLE -- NIGHT

Nothing fancy. \$69 dollars a night includes a microwave, HBO and a continental breakfast. Brett, thoroughly plastered now, sits in an easy chair smoking a joint.

BRETT

Well come out and lemme see it!

DEB (O.C.)

(from the bathroom)

Did you really pick this out yourself?

BRETT

The girl at the counter told me it's what all the hot mistresses are wearing these days.

DEB (O.C.)

Oh that's really fuckin' funny.

BRETT

Come on, baby, you're driving me
crazy out here!

DEB (O.C.)

Well at least put some music on for
chrissakes. Nothin' worse than
dancing to the quiet.

Brett switches on the clock radio, searches for a station.

DEB (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Whoa whoa go back. I like that one.

Brett finds the station: R. Kelly's *Ignition Remix* plays.

BRETT

This one?

Before he receives an answer Deb slinks out of the bathroom in a lipstick red lingerie outfit which leaves nothing to the imagination. She puts on a real show, strutting around the room like it's her personal catwalk and if she's not exactly a pro she's nowhere near an amateur. And she's certainly not timid. She bends over the dresser, touches her toes and looks at Brett between her legs. Grabs the remote control now, slides it down her panties and rubs it up and down, moaning like she's having the most mind-blowing orgasm of her life.

Finally, she unsnaps her lace bra, lets it drop to the floor and straddles Brett on the chair. She buries his head between her breasts and reaches down to his crotch.

DEB

I think I woke somebody up.

BRETT

Can he come out and play?

DEB

(nibbling his earlobe)

I don't know. You have to ask his
mommy.

BRETT

(whispers in her ear)

Can he come out and play, mommy?

Deb bites her lip and nods. She slides down to her knees, tugs his suit pants down to his ankles and starts giving him a blowjob. Brett leans his head back. His eyes narrow in bliss as the music continues...

INT. BEST WESTERN HOTEL -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Postcoital repose. Deb's head rests on Brett's bare chest. He's smoking the rest of the joint as they watch TV.

BRETT

I had a dream the other night that I walked downstairs and you were in the kitchen making breakfast. The kids came down dressed for school. We were a family.

DEB

(looks up at him)
It can be that way.

BRETT

It's the kids. That's the only reason I'm not out already.

She pulls him close and holds him, hoping against hope.

EXT. DEB'S HOUSE -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Brett's Cadillac sedan rolls into the drive. Deb climbs out and pulls the faux fur hood of her puffy coat up over her head as she moves around to Brett's window. He lowers it.

DEB

When am I gonna see you again?

BRETT

Saturday if I don't have this work dinner. I'll let ya know.

She leans in and kisses him. Long, deep, passionate.

DEB

Don't leave me lonely too long.

BRETT

See ya, babe.

Deb watches the sedan drive off, then stomps the snow off her boots and enters the home.

INT. DEB'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

The digital alarm clock reads **6:15 AM**. Deb's in a deep hangover sleep that could easily last until noon. A CHILD'S GIGGLING is heard.

Her drunken eyes open narrowly and take in a little boy, JESSE, 1, standing at the dresser. He's opened a drawer and is tossing her panties all over the room.

DEB
Bridg! Bridget, he's into my
panties again!

A moment later Bridget rushes into the room and scoops Jesse into her arms. She shoots her mom a guilty look.

BRIDGET
Sorry.
(to Jesse)
Come here, you little stinker.

Bridget blows a MOUTH FART on Jesse's belly and he SQUEALS wildly as he's carried out of the room. Deb falls back onto her pillows and grimaces from a headache: *too early to be up.*

INT. KITCHEN -- MORNING

Deb comes down the stairs in her work uniform. A crimson *Pathmark* shirt, name tag, black slacks and Asics sneakers. Jesse's in his high chair, firing Cheerios around. Deb considers the pile on the floor and decides against cleaning it up: *not her kid, not her problem.*

She opens a cabinet, pops two Advils and swallows them with a glass of water. Outside the window, she sees Bridget standing by the RABBIT HUTCH on the edge of the yard refilling the food and water dispensers.

Deb switches on the radio, then opens the freezer and removes a breakfast Hot Pocket. Pops it into the microwave and pours herself a glass of Hawaiian Punch while she waits.

Bridget enters from the side door, stomps the snow off her boots and removes her bulky winter jacket. She immediately begins picking up the Cheerios from the floor.

DEB
What is it with him and the panties
anyway?

BRIDGET
I don't know. He does it to me,
too.

DEB
Panties?

BRIDGET

Mmm hmm.

DEB

Every time?

BRIDGET

Mmm hmm. Maybe he likes how they feel or somethin'.

DEB

That's weird.

BRIDGET

It's not weird, mom. He's a baby. He doesn't know what he's doin'.

DEB

He knows something. Six drawers in that dresser and he never goes after the blouses.

Bridget discards the Cheerios in the trash, takes a jar of baby food from a cabinet and begins feeding Jesse.

BRIDGET

Tyler texted seein' if I wanted to go to dinner with him tonight.

(Deb makes a sour face)

Don't make that face.

(Deb makes an even sourer face)

Can you watch J for a couple hours?

DEB

Just make sure he's bathed before you go. And changed. Last time he crapped all over himself then started crawling around on the carpet.

BRIDGET

(to Jesse, baby-voice)

You didn't do that, didja?

DEB

Oh yes he did. Took a whole bottle of Febreze to get the smell out.

DING! -- the Hot Pocket's done. Deb slides it onto a paper plate and sits down across from Bridget.

DEB (CONT'D)

So where's Romeo taking you?

BRIDGET

Maybe just Coco's then to see a movie.

DEB

Just don't let him sweet-talk you into startin' something up again.

(Bridget scowls)

I'm just sayin', Bridg, you get amnesia. He takes you out, says one nice thing an' all a sudden -- poof -- you forget all a the shitty things he's done to you.

BRIDGET

At least he's makin' an effort.

DEB

If he was makin' an effort he'd come over and see his son once in a while stead'a playin' video games and scratchin' his ass.

A KNOCK at the side door. Deb glances that way and sees her older sister, KATH, 34, standing outside in a Penn State hooded sweatshirt, baggy pajama pants and snow boots. Kath is everything Deb is not: plain, reasonable, responsible. She married her high school sweetheart. First child came a year later. She works as a secretary at the local elementary school and lives directly across the street from Deb.

DEB (CONT'D)

Oh Christ. Don't say nothin' about Brett takin' me out last night, ok?

BRIDGET

I won't.

DEB

I'm serious Bridg. I don't wanna hear her shit right now.

BRIDGET

I won't. Geez Louise.

Deb opens the side door.

DEB

Yeesss...?

KATH

(holds up an empty milk carton)

(MORE)

KATH (CONT'D)
I need some milk. The boys're about
to get up.

DEB
I think we might be able to spare
some.

Deb steps aside. Kath enters, moves to the refrigerator, and
takes out the milk gallon.

DEB (CONT'D)
You're lucky you live so close to
your little sister. I don't know
how you'd survive without me.

KATH
Something tells me I'd manage.

Kath refills her milk carton, then turns to Deb.

KATH (CONT'D)
So how was your night out with
Brett?

Deb looks askance at Bridget.

BRIDGET
I didn't say nothin'.

KATH
I saw his fancy car in the driveway
at two in the morning.

DEB
So you're stalking me now?

KATH
I thought that was all over.

DEB
I don't know why you're *thinking*
about it at all.

KATH
What the hell are you doing, Deb?

DEB
Okay you know what --

KATH
Didn't we just have this
conversation?

DEB
Get out. I'm not dealin' with your
shit, Kath.

Kath folds her arms stubbornly: *well I'm not leaving.*

KATH
You're gonna get yourself in
trouble.

Deb TURNS THE RADIO UP LOUD to drown out her sister. The song is *Mr. Mister 'Kyrie'*. She CLAPS her hands over her head.

DEB
I love this song!

Deb begins to SING and DANCE, rolling her shoulders and shaking her ass, really rubbing Kath's nose in it.

DEB (CONT'D)
(the BIG REFRAIN part)
Whoa-ooo-ooo!
Whoa-ooo-ooo!

DEB (CONT'D)	KATH
<i>Carry a laser down the road that I must travel/</i>	Carry a laser?

DEB (CONT'D)	KATH
<i>Carry a laser through the darkness of the night/</i>	You know those aren't even the words, right?

Kath's snark only makes Deb SING LOUDER and DANCE more wildly. Jesse begins to LAUGH and CLAP HIS HANDS now. Bridget can't help but smile. Kath glowers at her.

BRIDGET
Sorry, I'm not laughing at you. I'm
laughing at J. Look at him.

Deb lifts Jesse out of his highchair and dances with him in her arms. Kath's seen enough.

KATH
You really need to grow the hell
up, Deb.

Kath grabs her milk and storms out the side door.

EXT. DEB'S HOUSE -- LAMP POST LANE -- MORNING

Muttering curses under her breath, Kath stomps across Deb's yard to her home across the street. Her husband, TERRY, 36, a paunchy, amiable carpenter wearing a flannel jacket and knit cap, is shoveling last night's snowfall off their driveway.

TERRY
 (seeing Kath's
 frustration)
 What'd she do this time?

KATH
 Shovel her driveway when you're
 done.

Kath continues inside, slams the door behind her. Terry looks across the street and sees Deb dancing through the windows. He shakes his head, keeps shoveling.

INT. DODGE SPIRIT, MOVING -- MORNING

Deb drives, smoking and singing along to *Melissa Etheridge's 'Come to My Window.'* She knows every word. Up ahead, the light turns red. Deb floors the gas pedal, runs the light. Cars HONK! Deb raises her middle finger, doesn't miss a note.

INT. PATHMARK GROCERY STORE -- ASTON -- AFTERNOON

Deb wanders through the aisles until she finds a co-worker, CINDY, 23, a naive, short-haired redhead, restocking shelves. Deb takes Cindy by the arm and leads her toward the back.

DEB
 Come with me. I wanna show you
 something.

CINDY
 But Paul asked me to --

DEB
 Susie brought in the new *Playgirl*
 and there's a guy in there who
 looks just like Mark the Butcher.

They turn into the --

INT. EMPLOYEE LUNCH ROOM

-- where a pack of FEMALE CO-WORKERS have gathered for a surprise wedding shower.

CO-WORKERS
 SURPRISE!!!

Cindy GASPS, covers her heart, turns to Deb.

CINDY
Jesus, Deb.

LATER

Slices of sheet cake are passed around while Cindy, garish veil on her head, opens gifts. She reaches for a little box, opens it and pulls out a purple VIBRATOR.

CINDY
Oh my Lord. Who got this? Deb?

DEB
Wait til football season. You'll be pullin' that out more than your wallet.

PAUL, 40s, the gay, affable store manager, enters.

PAUL
Sorry to break this up, ladies, but we got quite a line out there.

Deb BLOWS on a party horn. Paul glowers.

PAUL (CONT'D)
You think I wanna do this, Deb?

Deb BLOWS on it again. Harder.

INT. PATHMARK GROCERY STORE -- CHECK-OUT LANE -- AFTERNOON

Deb scans items for a disheveled ELDERLY WOMAN, 80s. She hesitates at a box of Eggo waffles.

DEB
Did you want the Mixed Berry, Mrs. Riley?

ELDERLY WOMAN
Huh?

DEB
Mixed Berry. You usually get the Homestyle kind.

Elderly Woman seems utterly confused.

DEB (CONT'D)
Lemme go and get the Homestyle for ya, okay?

(MORE)

DEB (CONT'D)
Patrick, put this on the steps for me, willya?

PATRICK
You're not the boss a me.

DEB
I'm the boss of everyone. Now put it on the steps.

Patrick grudgingly takes the diaper bag.

TERRY
Need a hand with anything, Deb?

DEB
There's a twelve-pack on the front steps.

Terry stands, heads for the front door. Murph exits the kitchen and approaches Deb, arms outstretched --

MURPH
Can I hold J? Please please please?

Deb passes Jesse down to Murph.

MURPH (CONT'D)
Am I allowed to show him my new Viking battle sword?

DEB
No battle swords. Christ, 'member what happened the last time?

The boys stay in the living room to play while Deb continues into the --

KITCHEN

where Kath and their mother, PEGGY, 60s, a tall, thin Irish woman and devout Catholic, are readying paper plates and utensils for everyone. Peggy wears a dated floral blouse, brown polyester slacks and a crucifix necklace.

DEB
Hey, Ma.

PEGGY
Hi, Deborah.

Deb kisses her mother. Terry enters, sets a twelve-pack of Miller Lite down on the counter.

Patrick opens the pizza box and dangles a slice over his mouth. Terry snatches it before he can take a bite and places it back in the box.

TERRY

Wait til your mother says we're ready. Go on, get outta here.

Patrick makes a LIP FART then joins the sword fight going on in the family room. Terry cracks open two cans of beer, hands one to Deb then heads back toward his recliner.

Now it's just the women. The leftover tension between Deb and Kath is palpable. Deb hops up onto the counter with her beer and waits for Kath to look in her direction. Kath finally does. They lock eyes for a moment.

KATH

You wanna say something?

DEB

Do you?

KATH

No. But it looks like you got something on your mind.

Deb shakes her head, *nope*. Kath turns away, disgusted.

PEGGY

Where's Bridget tonight?

DEB

Date night with Dipshit.

PEGGY

I don't like that word, Deborah.

DEB

I don't really give a crap.

PEGGY

Are they trying to work things out for Jesse's sake?

DEB

Hope not. I hope it all falls apart and I never hafta see his deadbeat ass again.

Kath opens a cabinet beside Deb. Deb reaches down and squeezes her ass. Kath whips back, not amused.

KATH
Cut it out, Deb.

Deb squeezes her ass again.

KATH (CONT'D)
I'm not laughing.

Deb reaches out to squeeze it again. Kath swats her hand away. Deb smiles. Kath cracks, smiles, too. Despite her best efforts, she can't stay mad at her sister long.

KATH (CONT'D)
Make yourself useful and get the drinks ready.

DEB
Yessir.

Deb hops down, gets to work.

INT. KITCHEN -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Post-dinner. Deb sits at the kitchen table drinking a beer and flipping through a *Star* magazine while Kath loads the dishwasher. Terry and Peggy can be seen lounging in the family room and we hear the thumps and crashes of the three boys horsing around in the basement.

KATH
Are you at least gonna apologize for that little dance number you put on this morning?

DEB
(pushes the magazine aside, mockingly now)
Kathy Margaret Tate, I am truly, deeply sorry for my behavior.

KATH
Yeah it sounds like it.

DEB
It's just, everything with you turns into a lesson. After awhile you get tired a hearin' that shit.

KATH
You think I wanna be like that? Think I wanna watch out my windows to see if he's coming over?

DEB

I don't know. You do it all the time so you must not hate it. Maybe you're bored with your own life so you gotta watch mine.

KATH

Okay. You know what.
(raises her middle finger)
I do it cause I'm worried about you.
(softly so Peg won't hear)
And God forbid mom should find out you're runnin' with a married man.

DEB

Oh God forbid.
(blesses herself)
Holy Family might kick her outta the Parish Bridge Club. Or, or Father Cassano might not let me receive the Eucharist.

KATH

You haven't been to mass in years, Deb.

DEB

Because a shit like this! I don't wanna go where I'm not welcome. They look at me like I'm some kinda leper there.

KATH

Who looks at you like that?

DEB

Remember when I was pregnant with Bridg? I walked into Church and could hear them all whispering, *pss pss pss*, like little asshole mice.

KATH

Oh don't be so dramatic.

DEB

Wasn't it God who said forgive everyone and have mercy and love the least of my people or whatever? Didn't he say that?

KATH

I don't remember.

DEB

Well I do.

KATH

I guess I'm just looking at it from the other side. He's got a wife, two young kids. They made a commitment to each other.

DEB

Oh Christ. You're livin' in the Stone Ages, you know that?

KATH

What's that supposed to mean?

DEB

It means when you get to the altar and say, *I promise to love and honor you all the days of my life*, it doesn't mean what it used to. It's not practical.

KATH

Worked for Ter and I, didn't it?

DEB

Know why it worked? Cause you never experienced anything else. How would you know if what you got is the best thing in the world or the worst thing? Terry's dick is the only dick you've ever seen.

(Kath glares)

Who else?

KATH

Deb.

DEB

Kevin Seltzer?

KATH

Do you have to be so crude all the time?

DEB

Was it as big as they say?

(Kath glares again)

What? I'm curious. Kelly Manion claimed he had a hose.

KATH

And what, you're proud that you've
slept with half the guys in
Delaware County?

PEGGY (O.C.)

Kath, I'll have my coffee now.

KATH

(calls into family room)
Two minutes.

Kath begins to prep the Mr. Coffee machine.

DEB

I'm not proud, no, but I know
what's good and what's not cause
I've been around a few times.

KATH

Well congratulations.

DEB

We're in love. And if we'd'a met
before I had a kid or before he met
his wife, everyone would be happy
for us. Instead I'm a goddamn
leper. Well I got news for ya. All
that shit they taught us at Saint
Joe's growin' up. I don't believe a
fuckin' word of it. There's nothing
wrong with feelin' good.

Deb finishes her beer, removes another from the refrigerator.
She glances back to make sure Terry's out of earshot, then
approaches Kath and speaks quietly.

DEB (CONT'D)

What if someone else came along?

KATH

(chuckles)
Someone else? You mean like Tom
Selleck?

DEB

Tom Selleck walked into this
kitchen and said, *Kath, I got a
hard-on to take you upstairs and go
down on your for an hour.*

Kath considers it. Grabs the beer from Deb, takes a swig.

DEB (CONT'D)
Would you say, *You know, Tom, I'd love to fuck your brains out, too, but I made a promise to Terry.*

KATH
(thinks, then)
Actually I would.

DEB
Bullshit.
(considers Kath a moment)
Actually you probably would which is even more depressing.

The basement door opens. Murph and Patrick emerge. Murph's carrying a red-faced, sobbing Jesse in his arms.

DEB (CONT'D)
What happened?

MURPH
Bumped his head on the trampoline.

Murph passes Jesse off to Deb.

DEB
Why's he on the damn trampoline in the first place?

PATRICK
He said he wanted to go on it.

DEB
How? He can't talk.

Guilty, Murph and Patrick rush off before more blames comes.

DEB (CONT'D)
(to Jesse)
Oh it's okay. You're gettin' tired.

KATH
Want some ice?

DEB
Nah, he's tough. He'll be fine.

Kath pours a coffee for Peggy and carries it into the living room as Deb rocks Jesse in her arms.

INT. DEB'S HOUSE -- JESSE'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Deb lays a sleeping Jesse down in his crib.

INT. DEB'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Deb's under the covers with a portable phone to her ear. She's masturbating while having phone sex with Brett.

DEB

Oh my God -- keep doin' it like
that -- you're gonna make me come --
oh god, Brett -- I'm gonna come --

INT. DEB'S BEDROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT

The TV's still on. Deb's asleep. Jesse can be heard WAILING from down the hall. Deb stirs.

DEB

Bridg? Bridget?

No response. Jesse's CRIES GROW LOUDER. Deb grumbles, climbs out of bed. She moves down the hall, opens Bridget's bedroom door. The bed's empty.

DEB (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ.

INT. DEB'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

The digital clock reads **7:15 AM**. Deb opens her eyes. Jesse's asleep beside her with a pacifier in his mouth.

INT. KITCHEN -- MORNING

Deb feeds Jesse a jar of baby food while she dials a number on the portable phone. The call goes to Bridget's voicemail.

BRIDGET (V.O.)

This is Bridg. You know what to do.

DEB

It's 8:20. I don't care how
hungover you are, you better get
your ass home. I'm not your
personal babysitter.

INT. FAMILY ROOM -- AFTERNOON

Jesse wobbles around the family room picking up and throwing toys everywhere. Deb tries Bridget's cell phone again.

BRIDGET (V.O.)

This is Bridg. You know what to do.

Frustrated, Deb lifts Jesse into her arms, exits the home --

EXT. LAMP POST LANE -- AFTERNOON

-- and marches across the street to Kath's house. Murph and Patrick are tossing a football in the front yard.

MURPH

Hi Aunt Deb.

DEB

Is your mom home?

MURPH

They're in my dad's office.

Deb doesn't bother knocking. Just marches inside --

INT. KATH'S HOUSE

-- and heads down a hall to the office. Kath and Terry are in the cramped office reviewing monthly bills with a calculator.

KATH

What's goin' on?

DEB

Can I leave him here for a little while? Bridg didn't come home last night and I can't get a hold a her.

KATH

What do you mean she didn't come home?

DEB

I mean she went out with Dipshit and God knows what they got into. I'm goin' over there.

Kath takes Jesse into her arms.

KATH

Deb, don't do anything crazy.

But Deb's already walking out of the office. Kath looks at Terry. He knows what she's thinking.

TERRY
I'm gettin' my keys.

Terry stands, goes.

EXT. HENDRICK HOME -- ASTON -- AFTERNOON

Deb's Dodge screeches to a halt by the curb outside a humble ranch-style home. Deb hops out, marches to the front door and RINGS THE DOORBELL a few times.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.C.)
Alright alright. Jesus. I'm comin'.

The door opens revealing CAROL HENDRICK, 40, a grouchy, heavysset woman wearing jeans and a Hershey Park sweatshirt. Carol isn't thrilled to see Deb. No love lost here.

CAROL
Can I help you?

DEB
Where's Bridget?

CAROL
How would I know?

DEB
She went out with Ty last night and she never came home. So I assume she slept here.

CAROL
She never slept here.

DEB
Where's Tyler?

CAROL
(hesitates, then)
Out with some friends.

The SOUND OF VIDEO GAMES is heard upstairs. BOYS LAUGHING. Deb brushes past Carol and continues to the staircase.

CAROL (CONT'D)
Hey! You can't just barge in here like that, Deb.

Just then, Terry's pick-up truck arrives at the home. He climbs out and approaches the front door.

TERRY
Hey, Carol.

CAROL
You better get her outta here 'fore
I call the cops on her ass.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY -- AFTERNOON

Deb stalks down the hall chasing the sound of the VIDEO GAMES. She opens a bedroom door. Inside, TYLER HENDRICK, 18, Bridget's boyfriend and Jesse's father, sits on a futon beside TWO FRIENDS, both 18. Tyler's thin, gawky, zit-faced, and immature. An aimless idler chronically babied and enabled by his mother. The three boys have been smoking weed and, startled by Deb's sudden arrival, quickly crush out the joint and fan away the smoke.

BOYS (TOGETHER)
Whoa! The hell -- !

Deb YANKS the power cord out of the XBox.

DEB
(to Tyler)
Where's Bridget?

TYLER
(re: the XBox)
What'd you do that for!?

Terry enters, followed by Carol who stands with the portable phone in her hand.

CAROL
You got fifteen seconds to leave or
I'm callin' the cops, Deb.

TERRY
Come on, Deb.

DEB
(staring at Tyler)
Tell me where she is and I'll
leave.

TYLER
I don't know where the hell she is.
I dropped her off at Jenna's house.

DEB
Jenna's?

TYLER CAROL
Jenna Cunningham. We got into an argument at dinner -- We're down to 10.

TYLER
She didn't wanna go home. The girls were all hangin' out over there, so I dropped her off.
(under his breath)
Geez. Crazy bitch.

DEB
(hears it)
You're trash you know that.

CAROL
Five seconds.

TYLER
Well you're a dirty skank who has phone sex with her boyfriends.

FRIENDS stifle laughs.

TYLER (CONT'D)
(to Friends)
Bridget told me she could barely sleep cause she'd hear her mom playin' with herself all night.

DEB
Why don't you ever come by and see your son? Huh?

DEB TYLER
Cause you're a piece a trash-- Cause I know you're gonna be there.

DEB (CONT'D)
-- who was raised by trash and that's all you're ever gonna be.

CAROL
That's it, I'm callin'.

Deb moves to exit and SLAPS the phone out of Carol's hand as she goes. Terry awkwardly picks the phone up, hands it back to Carol, then follows Deb down the stairs.

EXT. HENDRICK HOME -- AFTERNOON

Deb stalks to her car in the street. Terry follows --

TERRY

For Chrissake, Deb, you can't just bust into their house like that.

Deb climbs into her Dodge, SLAMS the door shut on Terry. He TAPS on the window --

TERRY (CONT'D)

Deb? Deb, where you goin' now?

Deb speeds off.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Goddamnit.

Terry scrambles back to his pick-up. Guns it to catch up.

INT. JENNA CUNNINGHAM'S HOUSE -- ASTON -- AFTERNOON

JENNA CUNNINGHAM, 17, a friend of Bridget's, sits on the couch in her pajamas, groggy and hungover. Deb sits across from her. Terry hovers nearby.

JENNA

She got here around ten, I guess. She was upset. Said she got into another fight with Tyler. We had some drinks and she left around midnight, I guess.

DEB

She was just gonna walk home in the freezing cold?

JENNA

That's what I said. I told her just to sleep here -- that I'd drive her home in the morning -- but she said it was only a mile and that you'd be mad if you woke up and had to take care a Jesse.

INT. DEB'S DODGE SPIRIT, DRIVING -- TWILIGHT

It's getting dark. Deb drives slowly along the road Bridget would have walked home last night, searching the sidewalks and storefronts for any sign of her daughter.

Cars HONK behind her. She switches on her flashers and continues along the shoulder. Panic is setting in.

EXT. LAMP POST LANE -- NIGHT

We're looking at KATH'S HOUSE. Through the bay window, we see Murph and Patrick lounging on the couch watching football. Terry sits in the recliner with a sleeping Jesse in his arms.

PAN TO DEB'S HOUSE. Through the kitchen window we see Deb pacing around the kitchen with a cigarette in her hand. An unmarked detective car rolls into the drive. TWO DETECTIVES step out and approach the home.

INT. DEB'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- MINUTES LATER

Deb's a basket case. And she's still pacing. Kath and Peggy sit at the table across from DETECTIVE SERGEANT MORRIS, 50, a gruff, mustached veteran, and a friend of the family, and DETECTIVE O'BRIEN, 40, lanky, clean-cut. The Detectives are drinking mugs of coffee which Kath has prepared.

DETECTIVE MORRIS

And what about Bridget's father?

DEB

He's not around.

DETECTIVE MORRIS

How long's that been the case?

DEB

Since he found out I was pregnant sixteen years ago. He never wanted anything to do with Bridget or me.

PEGGY

Deb, would you sit down, please?

Deb ignores Peg.

DETECTIVE MORRIS

Where's he living now?

DEB

South Carolina? Florida? -- who fuckin' knows? Look, you're wastin' your time with him. Tyler Hendrick. He's the one you should be lookin' at.

(MORE)

DEB (CONT'D)

He got into an argument with Bridg last night, he never wanted her to have the baby in the first place, and he's been violent with her before.

DETECTIVE MORRIS

Whaddaya mean violent?

DEB

Hi hit her once. And Bridg never liked tellin' me all the bad shit he did, so if he hit her once you can be sure it was more than that.

DETECTIVE O'BRIEN

Was an incident report ever filed?

DEB

I told her to file one, but she wasn't gonna do that to the father of her baby. What I'm sayin' is all the boxes are checked off here, ok?

PEGGY

Deborah, will you please sit down?

DEB

(whips to Peggy)

Mom, if you ask me to sit down one more fuckin' time.

(to Kath, stern)

Will you get her outta here? I can't deal with her right now.

KATH

(to Peggy)

Just let her be, Ma. Okay?

Peggy backs off. Detectives share a look, then:

DETECTIVE MORRIS

We understand what you're sayin' Deb, but Tyler claims he got home from the date around 10:30 PM and stayed inside the rest of the night. His parents said the same.

DEB

Oh big-fuckin'-surprise. They'll say any bullshit to protect him. They're trash those people.

Ashamed of Deb's language, Peggy excuses herself from the table and wanders off into the family room.

DETECTIVE MORRIS

Is there anyone you can think of besides Tyler that would've had a reason to harm her?

DEB

No. He's the only one.

Morris looks at O'Brien: *anything else?* O'Brien shakes his head. Morris flips his notepad shut. Detectives stand.

DETECTIVE MORRIS

Okay. Well if you think of anything else let us know. In the meantime, we got her photo out to all our patrol cars. Chester and Bucks County departments, too. If she's out there we're gonna find her.

DEB

So what are we supposed to do? Just sit here and wait?

DETECTIVE MORRIS

We'll call as soon as we hear anything. Thanks for the coffee, Kath.

INT. DEB'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Unable to sleep, Deb stares at the portable phone on the night stand, silently imploring it to ring. She rolls over. Jesse's asleep beside her, his pacifier moving in his mouth, blissfully unaware of the disaster unfolding around him.

Then Deb does something she hasn't done in a very long time. She blesses herself and whispers a silent prayer that God help return her daughter.

INT. ASTON COMMUNITY CENTER -- MORNING

300 volunteers from the community stand bundled-up in their winter clothes, ready for a day of searching in the cold. Among them are Bridget's HIGH SCHOOL CLASSMATES and some of Deb's co-workers at Pathmark, including PAUL and CINDY.

An exhausted, hasn't-slept-in-days Deb stands before the group holding Jesse in her arms. He's acting shy, his head buried against Deb's neck. She addresses the volunteers --

DEB

Hi. My name's Deb Connor. I'm Bridget's mother. This is Jesse, Bridget's son. I just wanted to thank everyone for bein' here and helpin' us try to bring her home.

EXT. ASTON COMMUNITY CENTER -- MORNING

The VOLUNTEERS load onto school buses to be driven out to the search areas.

DEB (V.O.)

It's been three days since we saw Bridget. She left home around 7 o'clock on Friday night.

EXT. LOCAL FOREST -- AFTERNOON

Teenagers and volunteers scour the woodland for clues.

DEB (V.O.)

She was wearin' a pink hooded sweatshirt and blue jeans. And she had on black snow boots with like a fur trim on top.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Terry, Kath, Murph and Patrick walk together. Patrick's getting tired. Terry scoops him into his arms, continues on.

DETECTIVE MORRIS (V.O.)

We had Deb bring a photo of Bridget in for everyone to take a look at.

BACK TO:

DEB AT THE COMMUNITY CENTER

She holds up a recent photo of Bridget with Jesse in her arms. Bridget's smiling, happy. The volunteers soak it in.

DEB

She had her hair colored a few days ago. So it's a little darker now, little more brown, but not much...

EXT. ASTON -- TOWN STREETS -- NIGHT

POLICE OFFICERS and VOLUNTEERS hang 'Missing' tipline flyers of Bridget around town.

DEB (V.O.)

This is a mother's worst nightmare.

EXT. EXPANSE -- DUSK -- VARIOUS ANGLES

FLASHLIGHTS glide across the stubble as SEARCH TEAMS and CANINE UNITS prowl the expanse.

FOUND ITEMS -- shoes, socks, t-shirts, panties, hats -- are photographed and evidence markers are set down.

DEB (V.O.)

To know that your daughter's out there somewhere.

INT. ASTON COMMUNITY CENTER -- NIGHT

Detective Morris shows Deb photographs of the found items. Deb shakes her head: none of it belongs to Bridget.

DEB (V.O.)

To think that maybe she's callin' for you...and you can't get to her to help...

EXT. ASTON COMMUNITY CENTER -- NIGHT

A CANDLELIGHT VIGIL is held outside the Community Center. One candle flame becomes two...four...sixteen...a hundred...

DEB (V.O.)

I'm sorry, I just...

BACK TO:

DEB AT THE COMMUNITY CENTER

Overcome with emotion, she starts to break down. Tears stream down her face. Kath approaches and takes Jesse from her arms and helps to steady her sister. It takes Deb a few moments to regain her composure. Finally --

DEB

...I miss her. I miss my daughter.
Her son misses his mother. We just
wanna find her and bring her home.

Detective Morris steps forward and begins instructing the Volunteers. But we don't hear a word he's saying. Instead we stay on Deb, wiping her tears, gazing at the three hundred anonymous faces staring back at her with pity. *How could they ever know what she's feeling right now?*

DISSOLVE TO:

A LOCAL NEWS SEGMENT

A REPORTER stands outside the Aston Community Center.

LOCAL NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)

It's been two harrowing weeks since
Bridget Connor was last seen and
questions continue to haunt her
mother.

CLIP #1: Deb sits on the front steps of her house in a puffy winter coat, smoking a cigarette.

DEB

There's no way Bridget woulda
gotten into a car with a stranger
and there's no way in hell she
woulda left her son. So somethin'
happened to her. And there's one
person that knows way more than
he's lettin' on.

REPORTER (O.C.)

Who's that?

DEB

Tyler Hendrick.

CLIP #2: Tyler is interviewed on his front lawn. CAROL and Tyler's FATHER, 40s, a scruffy mason, stand beside him.

TYLER

I'm not saying nothin' cause I
don't know nothin'. And I been
talkin' to the police this whole
time.

CAROL

Tyler has cooperated with the
police since day one. Day one.

TYLER

I've taken two lie detector tests and passed 'em both and they're still comin' around houndin' me. I mean that's the mother a my son. You think if I knew somethin' I wouldn't say it? Come on, man.

CLIP #3: SHERIFF OLDHAM, 60s, briefs a room of reporters.

SHERIFF OLDHAM

Bridget left a friend's house at approximately 11:50 PM on Friday, December 11th. We believe she was attempting to walk home using Ridge Road. Her cell phone was shut off at 12:03 AM. We are asking anyone who was driving on Ridge Road, or nearby that evening, anyone who might've seen a suspicious person or vehicle to please come forward.

CLIP #4: Deb trudges across her snow-covered backyard toward the rabbit hutch by the fence.

DEB

Bridg loved animals. 'specially horses. She used'ta volunteer at Willowmay Farms on the weekends.

Deb arrives at the hutch, takes the rabbit out of the cage and holds it in her arms.

DEB (CONT'D)

This is Clover. I got her for Bridg on her twelfth birthday. If it was up to her she'd have a hunnerd of 'em runnin' around.

REPORTER (O.C.)

If Bridget's out there watching, what would you like to say to her?

Deb's silent for a very long moment. Her mind going to the dark places a parent should never have to dwell in. Finally:

DEB

Just that I love her. And that I'm always with her.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL --

The segment is playing on the box television inside Deb's family room. Deb sits on the couch with a cigarette and a bottle of beer, absently watching. She looks even wearier than before, but now there's a vacantness in her eyes. The light of hope is imperceptible.

In the kitchen, Kath loads the dishwasher while Peggy feeds Jesse. They've taken over the daily household duties as Deb is nothing more than a ghost wandering through life.

KATH

Want me to make ya a hot ham and cheese, Deb?

DEB

I'm not hungry.

PEGGY

You need to eat something, Deborah.

Deb ignores her mother. Her cell phone VIBRATES atop the end table. '**Brett Calling...**' It's a call she's been waiting for, a needed escape from this nightmare. She hops off the couch and moves to the door. Kath notices --

KATH

Where you goin'?

DEB

Cigarettes.

KATH

It's pouring out. At least put on a coat.

But Deb's already's gone.

EXT. STRIP MALL PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Freezing rain and gusting wind. Deb's Dodge rolls into a parking spot. Deb climbs out without an umbrella and looks around. Across the lot, Brett's Cadillac flashes its lights. Deb hurries in that direction.

INT. BRETT'S CADILLAC -- MINUTES LATER

Brett holds a sobbing, drenched Deb in his arms.

BRETT

Jesus, Deb. I don't even know what to say. Is there anything I can do?

DEB

Just come see me. I can't take another day of sittin' around with my family just watching the clock go by... Just come over and sleep with me and lay next to me so I don't feel so goddamn alone.

BRETT

Okay. Saturday. I'll come and stay with you on Saturday.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DEB'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- SATURDAY NIGHT

Deb sits at the kitchen table with a goblet of wine and a cigarette. Kath comes down the stairs carrying Jesse and an overnight bag. She notices Deb's drinking -- again -- and it worries her but she decides against commenting.

KATH

What time should I put him down?

DEB

Whenever he seems ready. And if he's not goin', give him a few ounces of warm milk.

KATH

Try to get some rest, okay?

Kath nears, kisses Deb's forehead, then goes. Deb glances at the clock: **6:52 PM**. She finishes her wine, and pours herself another from the wine box inside the refrigerator.

LATER. Deb sits on the couch flipping through reality tv junk. She glances at the clock: **7:28 PM**. She lifts the portable phone beside her and dials a number.

BRETT'S VOICEMAIL (V.O.)

You've reached Brett Tobeck with Amherst Benefits Partners. Please leave a message.

DEB

It's me. Just uhh, wondering when you're gonna be here. Call me.

LATER. Tipsy now, Deb refills her wine from the box. It's empty and she tosses it into the trash can. She glances at the clock. **8:11 PM.** Lifts the wall phone, DIALS --

BRETT'S VOICEMAIL (V.O.)
You've reached Brett --

BRETT'S VOICEMAIL (V.O.)	DEB
-- Tobeck with Amherst	Fucking asshole cocksucker
Benefits Partners. Please	Tobeck --
leave a message.	

BEEP!

DEB
We get *one goddamn night together*
in the last month and you decide to
show up late? Fuck you.

LATER. **9:05 PM.** Deb paces around the kitchen with a beer in hand, shitfaced and unhinged. She has the portable phone against her ear and she's slurring her words --

DEB (CONT'D)
If you don't call me back in thirty
seconds I'm gonna come to your
house and tell your wife about how
you begged me to let you come
inside me because she wouldn't let
you do that anymore. Or, or I don't
know, about how you told me she'd
gotten fat and couldn't get you
hard anymore. Do you want me to
tell her you called her a fat ugly
pig? Hmmm? Yeah? Yeah? Thirty
seconds or I will fuckin' do it.

She hangs up. Lights a cigarette. Stares at the phone.

INT. DEB'S DODGE SPIRIT, MOVING -- NIGHT

Deb's driving. Badly. Veering in and out of her lane. A passing car HONKS, flashes its high beams.

She turns into a favorable development lined with Colonial-style homes. She scans the mailbox numbers until she arrives at the address she's looking for.

EXT. BRETT'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Deb trudges up the large, sloping yard to the front door. Peers into the windows. Dark inside. She KICKS the '*Bless This Home*' doormat revealing a HOUSE KEY hidden underneath.

INT. BRETT'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Quiet. Everyone asleep upstairs.

Deb enters and opens the refrigerator. She removes a carton of eggs and the butter dish. Finds a frying pan and switches on a burner. She cracks a few eggs into the pan.

Suddenly, Brett tiptoes in wearing only his boxer shorts. Fearing a burglar, he grips a baseball bat tightly in his hands. He stops, stunned by the sight of Deb.

BRETT

Deb...? Jesus Christ.

DEB

(nonchalant)

Want some coffee?

BRETT

(whispers angrily)

Coffee? What the -- are you out of your fuckin' mind coming here?

WIFE (O.S.)

(from upstairs)

Brett, what's going on?

BRETT

Nothing, just...everything's fine.

DEB

This is what you wanted, right? I'm in the kitchen making breakfast. Should we call the kids down?

WIFE (O.S.)

Honey, I'm calling the police.

BRETT

(calls upstairs)

Wait, just...

Deb reaches for a wooden spoon and begins turning the eggs. Brett nears, aggressively yanks the spoon from her hand.

BRETT (CONT'D)

You need to leave.

Deb just grabs another spoon. Brett pries it from her. *Fuck it* -- she moves to the mugs. Grabs two. Before Brett can wrestle them away she FIRES one at the wall. It SHATTERS!

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)

Mommy's what's going on

WIFE'S VOICE (O.S.)

Stay in your room.

Brett rips the second mug from her other hand. But Deb -- on a path of arbitrary destruction -- swipes a vase off the island -- **CRASH!** Then a candy jar -- **CRASH!** Then any fucking thing she can find to destroy -- **CRASH! CRASH! CRASH!** The demolition continues until --

WIFE (O.C.)

Get outta my house.

Deb turns. Brett's WIFE is standing there in her pajamas. We recognize her as the plump woman Deb saw at the grocery store earlier. The one harried by two fighting children.

Wife looks at Deb, then over at Brett knowingly. She doesn't need to ask who this woman is. She knows. There have been others before her. A long, pregnant silence, then:

WIFE (CONT'D)

Get out of my house or I'm going to call the police.

Deb just stares at Wife a moment. Finally she staggers out of the kitchen and down the hall. As she goes, she uses her hand to KNOCK the pictures of the family off the wall. The FALL and SHATTER on the hardwood floor.

DEB

Beautiful fucking family.

Deb exits.

INT. DEB'S DODGE SPIRIT, MOVING -- NIGHT

Deb drives along sinuous backroads. It's impossibly dark and she's driving way too fast. A turn approaches. She sees it, but -- tired of this life -- decides against making it. The Dodge barrels down the embankment -- towards the edge of a forest -- headed right for a tree when --

Deb chickens out at the last moment -- JERKS THE WHEEL -- the car SPINS OUT and IMPACTS THE TREE FROM THE SIDE! Deb's head SLAMS against the driver's side window! The WINDOW SHATTERS! **EEEEERRRRRR!** -- the car horn bellows.

Deb's unconscious. A few moments pass before headlights appear on the road above. An SUV slows, stops. A man climbs out of the car and stands at the crest of the embankment.

SUV DRIVER
Everyone alright down there?

No response so he shuffles down the snowy embankment. Opens the driver side door and looks in at Deb.

SUV DRIVER (CONT'D)
You okay, maam? Maam?

No response. He ducks in further and sees blood rushing down the side of her face.

SUV DRIVER (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ.

Driver scrambles back up the embankment to his car. Reaches inside and takes out a cell phone, DIALS --

SUV DRIVER (CONT'D)
Yeah I got a woman crashed her car out her on Dutton Mill Road. Send an ambulance quick, I don't know if she's alive or not.

FADE OUT.

EXT. DEB'S HOUSE -- FALL -- PRE-DAWN

Before the sun on a brisk Fall morning. The Elm trees are barren and skeletal. A Ford Taurus is parked in the drive alongside a Chevy Silverado. The house is completely dark.

SUPER: 2009

A light goes on in the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN -- MORNING

Deb, 38 now, starts a flame under a kettle and begins prepping for breakfast. Takes down a few mugs, bowls, a box of cereal. Dressed in floral pajamas, she's just as thin, pretty and fit as we remember and the only vestige of the car crash is a small scar above her right eye. But that jaunty, bullheaded, footloose young woman has vanished without a trace, replaced by someone jaded and defeated, someone who hasn't been given any proof that better days lie ahead.

DEB
(calls upstairs)
J, time to get up, honey.
(no response)
J, it's 7:15. Get movin'. Come on

JESSE (O.C.)
Where are my clothes?

DEB
I left 'em on your dresser.

Deb moves to the front door and retrieves the newspaper from the front step. Bats off the morning dew and places it on the table. She slips out the Sports Section and lays it on top.

A man comes down the stairs, tucking his flannel shirt into his Levi's. RAY LITTLETON, 40, is a short, wiry roughneck with thinning black hair and a mustache. He works at the Sun Oil refinery. They've been dating for nine months. He cozies up behind Deb, kisses her neck. She smiles. Sorta.

RAY
Mornin', babe.
(not a question)
How about some eggs and sausage,
huh.

DEB
Sure.

Ray sits at the table and unfolds the sports section she's set out for him. Deb dutifully brings him his coffee along with a sugar jar and a spoon.

RAY
I'm playin' poker over at Timmy
Haggert's tonight. I was gonna call
Terry, see if he wanted to join us.

DEB
That's good idea. I'm guessin' you
won't be home for dinner then?

RAY
I want something before I leave. I
don't wanna eat that fast food shit
they got over there all the time.

DEB
Me and J're gonna go over to Kath's
house, I think.

RAY
So fix something up before ya leave
then.

Deb moves back to the staircase.

DEB
J, come on, honey. Let's get moving
or you're gonna miss the bus again.

Moments later, JESSE comes down the stairs rubbing sleep from his eyes. He's 7 years old now, a 2nd grader. Sweet, shy, sensitive. He drops his backpack on the floor and plops down at the kitchen table beside Ray.

RAY
Why's your grandmother gotta scream
every morning to get you moving?
(Jesse shrugs)
Cause you're up all night playing
video games. Cut that out and your
ass'll be running down the stairs.

DEB
You want some cereal, honey?

JESSE
Mmm hmm.

Jesse pulls out his PlayStation Portable and begins tapping away on the buttons. The sound of the game instantly annoys Ray who peers over the top of the newspaper.

RAY
Put that away.

JESSE
Why?

RAY
Cause I said so. That's the only
reason you need.

Jesse looks at Deb.

DEB
You heard him.

Jesse reluctantly slips it back into his backpack. Deb sets his Frosted Flakes down. And he eats. Miserably.

INT. WIDENER UNIVERSITY -- COMPUTER LAB -- AFTERNOON

Intro to Computer Science. Deb -- finally pursuing her college degree -- sits among a classroom of college freshmen. If it isn't mortifying enough that she's the oldest student here by two decades, she's also the worst.

PROFESSOR WALTERS, 35, handsome, smug, ambles --

PROFESSOR WALTERS

Fill in the Taxes column by using a formula which calculates 35% of Gross Pay.

This seems like a cinch to everyone except Deb who looks at her screen as if everything's written in Japanese. She glances at her neighbors for direction.

PROFESSOR WALTERS (CONT'D)

What's the problem now, Deb?

DEB

Nothing. Just uhh, did you say 35%?

PROFESSOR WALTERS

Mmm hmm. Now fill in the Net Pay with a formula which subtracts the Taxes from the Gross Pay.

Deb hits a few keys. The spreadsheet disappears like a magic trick gone wrong.

DEB

Wait. Shit.

The class LAUGHS.

DEB (CONT'D)

Sorry. Something happened. It all just went...poof.

PROFESSOR WALTERS

Poof...? Has anyone here ever heard their computer go *poof* before?

Students CHUCKLE. Deb feels small.

PROFESSOR WALTERS (CONT'D)

Things don't go poof unless you make them go poof. Can someone volunteer to help Deb so she doesn't slow us up again?

EXT. WIDENER UNIVERSITY -- PARKING LOT -- AFTERNOON

Students smoke, skateboard, and shoot the breeze. Deb walks to her car when she notices Professor Walters across the lot. He's standing beside his yellow Jeep Wrangler flirting with a BLONDE COED.

Deb watches them a moment, then climbs inside her Ford and drives out of the lot.

EXT. DEB'S HOUSE -- BACKYARD -- AFTERNOON

Deb and Jesse kneel in front of the rabbit hutch replacing the food pellets and water for Bridget's rabbit Clover.

JESSE

Why's he always taking my things away?

DEB

Ray likes to be in control all the time. It makes him feel good when he's the boss a everything.

JESSE

Well it's annoying.

DEB

I know it's annoying. Annoys me, too. But he's paying for the house and all the bills while I'm in school, so we gotta put up with some of his bad qualities.

JESSE

Do you have to keep dating him?

DEB

I don't have to, I guess. But if it wasn't Ray it'd be someone else.

JESSE

Why?

DEB

I don't know. I just like having a man around. Besides, they all got their problems. Ray's not special.

JESSE

Are you gonna marry him?

DEB
Ray? God no. I'm not gonna marry anyone.

JESSE
Why not?

DEB
At my age the kinda guys you meet around here aren't worth marrying. Besides, Ray farts in his sleep.

Jesse chuckles, then places the water bowl and feeder back into the cage.

INT. KATH'S HOUSE -- FAMILY ROOM -- NIGHT

Friday night pizza night. Terry, 42 now, sits in that same brown recliner drinking a beer and watching a basketball game. He's gained fifteen pounds since we last saw him.

Peggy, 66 now, plays a game of solitaire on the coffee table.

INT. KITCHEN

KATH, 40 now, is decorating cardboard footballs for Murph's high school team. Deb's here to assist, but right now she has the curtain pulled back as she looks into the backyard where MURPH, 16 now, handsome and strong, a rising football star, is sitting beside his girlfriend, COLLEEN, 16. PATRICK, 12 now, and Jesse chase each other around with Nerf guns.

DEB
(re: Murph and Colleen)
Is it serious?

KATH
He's sixteen.

DEB
I had Bridget when I was sixteen.

KATH
I reminded him of that.

Murph blushes at something Colleen says.

DEB
Oh shit. He's in love.

KATH
Colleen's a sweet girl.

DEB

Is she just into him cause he's the big swinging dick football star?

KATH

No she's not like you.

DEB

Ewww.

KATH

Ewww.

Deb lets the curtain fall, returns to the decorating. Kath glances back into the family room to make sure Peggy's not listening, then speaks quietly to Deb --

KATH (CONT'D)

Did you hear about Father Cassano?

DEB

Oh God. What's the latest?

KATH

Five more boys have come forward.
Some of the things they're saying.
(shakes her head)
He would call them in for
'sessions' in the sacristy.

DEB

Jesus Christ. Did you ask Murph and Pat, yunno, just if --

KATH

Of course I asked them. They said nothing ever happened to them and they never saw any of it. But everyone knew he was strange.

DEB

What's mom sayin' about it all?

KATH

Not much. She's still bringing him meals over at the rectory every Thursday night. Thinks the boys are all just confused.

PEGGY (O.C.)

I'll have my coffee now, Kath.

KATH

Wanna get it for her?

DEB

Hell no.

Kath stands, pours a mug of coffee and carries it in to Peg. Deb stares in at her mother a long moment. She's a relic of the past. Someone Deb can't understand. Kath returns.

KATH

So how's Ray?

DEB

Ray's Ray. You know.

KATH

I heard you two arguing the other night.

DEB

And?

KATH

And I've been hearin' that a lot lately.

DEB

So buy a set'a ear plugs.

KATH

Is it going anywhere? I mean, it's been nine months now --

DEB

Oh Jesus Christ.

Deb abruptly pushes her chair away from the table and stands. She takes another beer out of the refrigerator, opens it.

DEB (CONT'D)

You know I'm here doin' you a favor, cuttin' out stupid-ass footballs all night and you're gonna start in on me?

KATH

You don't have to help anymore. I'm almost finished anyway.

Deb, still ticked-off and needing to release her anger on someone, fixes her stare on Terry lounging on the recliner.

DEB

Did Ray call you about playin' poker tonight?

TERRY
 (turns from the tv)
 Huh?

DEB
 Did Ray ask you to play poker with
 him tonight?

TERRY
 Yeah he called over here earlier.

DEB
 So why didn't you go?

TERRY
 Cause I'm tired. I worked all week.
 What's it to you anyway, Deb?

DEB
 What, you think you're better than
 him?

TERRY
 What're you talkin' about?

PEGGY
 What's the matter, Deb?

DEB
 (turns sharply to Peggy)
 Don't even get me started on you.

<p>DEB Bringin' meals to that fuckin' monster.</p>	<p>On me?</p>	<p>PEGGY</p>
--	---------------	--------------

DEB (CONT'D)
 Know what should bring him? A gun.
 So he could put that in his mouth
 and do us all a favor.

PEGGY
 I'm not speaking to you when you're
 acting like this.

KATH
 Why don't you just go home, Deb.

DEB
 (to Terry)
 Why didn't you go to poker?

TERRY
 You wanna know why I didn't go?

DEB
I just fuckin' asked you that,
didn't I? Yes I wanna know.

TERRY
Cause Tim Haggerty's an asshole.
Okay? And all those guys Ray hangs
around. They're all assholes.

DEB
Maybe you're the asshole. Ever
think of that?

TERRY
Kath, get her outta here!

KATH
Just go home, Deb.

Deb whips back to Kath casually working on the footballs.
She's grown expert at ignoring her sister's outbursts.

DEB
You want me to leave?

KATH
We all want you to leave.

Deb stomps across the kitchen, opens the back window and
shouts out to Jesse in the backyard.

DEB
Come on, J. We're goin. Your Aunt's
throwing us out of her house.

JESSE
But I'm playing --

DEB
Let's go! Now!

INT. DEB'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Deb's asleep. The bedroom door creaks open and a sloshed Ray
staggers in. He sits on the edge of the bed, slides off his
jeans, t-shirt, boots, then cuddles up next to Deb. Kisses
her neck, slides his hands up her t-shirt, down her panties.

DEB
Ray, I'm tired. In the morning.

But he persists. She surrenders, rolls over and spreads her
legs. She MOANS in pain as he enters her.

It doesn't take but a few pumps for him to finish. He grunts, then rolls off her and falls asleep. Deb fixes her t-shirt and panties, rolls back over and closes her eyes.

EXT. WILLOWMAY FARM -- NEWTOWN SQUARE -- AFTERNOON

An equestrian facility. 70 pristine, secluded acres. Deb's FAMILY and FRIENDS have gathered, as they do every year, to celebrate Bridget's birthday. A picnic table brims with snacks and drinks. Deb addresses the guests --

DEB

Just wanna thank everyone for makin' it out again this year. Bridget woulda been 22 years old today. She always loved this place. Loved comin' here and bein' around the horses. So it's nice to do this in a place she loved... And more than anything, we just wanna let her know we're still here...still lookin'...that we haven't forgotten about her.

LATER. Everyone SINGS HAPPY BIRTHDAY. A birthday cake is placed before Jesse. It takes him a few breaths, but he finally blows out all 22 candles.

STILL LATER. A hundred RED BALLOONS are released into the sky. Deb watches them ascend and shrink to pinpricks.

EXT. SUN VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL -- FOOTBALL STADIUM -- NIGHT

A football game is played under the lights.

IN THE BLEACHERS

The whole family's here to watch Murph's team play. Deb sits beside Ray and Jesse.

DEB

I'm gonna go and get a soda. Anyone want anything?

RAY

Get me some popcorn.

JESSE

Can I have a hot dog?

Ray hands Deb some cash and she leaves. Ray and Jesse watch the game for a few moments. Murph, playing linebacker, sacks the quarterback. FANS CHEER. Parents congratulate Terry.

Ray glances down at the concessions stand and sees Deb chatting with a MAN, 35. She's giggling, smiling.

INT. RAY'S TRUCK, MOVING -- NIGHT

Driving home. Ray's in a dark mood. Something's knocking around his brain that won't quit. Unaware, Deb and Jesse are chatting about the game while Deb munches on popcorn.

JESSE

Murph had three sacks, five tackles for a loss and two tipped balls.

DEB

What's a tipped ball?

JESSE

When the quarterback throws a pass and someone knocks it down before --

RAY

(interrupts)

Who were you talkin' to?

DEB

Huh?

RAY

At the snack stand. You were talkin' to some guy.

DEB

Oh. Uhh, Matt Carter. We went to high school together.

RAY

He must be funny, huh? Way you were laughin'.

DEB

(looks over at Ray,
doesn't like his tone)

Whatever you're trying to get at, Ray, I wish you'd hurry up and get at it.

They stop at a traffic light. A long silence follows. Then, in a flash, RAY LUNGES OVER AND SLAMS DEB'S HEAD AGAINST THE PASSENGER WINDOW! HARD. The popcorn SPILLS. She looks at him, nonplussed. His abuse has been verbal, but never physical.

DEB (CONT'D)

The hell'd you do that --

Before she can finish, he reaches over and SLAMS HER HEAD against the window again! She looks at him, surprise now replaced by terror. Jesse tenses in the backseat. The light turns green. Ray drives.

RAY

Everyone told me to stay away from you, Deb. That you had a big goddamn mouth. Well if you expect me to keep payin' for your house and your car and your fancy goddamn haircuts, then shit's gonna change around here. Understand?

Deb's too startled to respond. Ray looks over at her.

RAY (CONT'D)

I asked if you understand.

Shaken, Deb nods.

INT. ASTON MIDDLE SCHOOL -- MAIN OFFICE -- DAY

Jesse's in a chair playing his Playstation Portable. Kath, lead secretary at the school, sits behind the desk on the phone with a parent.

KATH

We just need a doctor's note, Mrs. Caponi... Because he's missed two weeks of class already...

Deb enters, waves to Kath, then turns to Jesse.

DEB

Ready?

(Jesse doesn't move)

Come on, we're gonna be late.

Jesse reluctantly grabs his backpack, hops of out the chair.

INT. DEB'S FORD TAURUS, MOVING -- AFTERNOON

Deb drives. Jesse sits in the passenger seat, quiet and glum.

DEB
What's with the silent routine?

JESSE
Why do I even have to go?

DEB
Cause he's your father.

JESSE
Not really. I mean, he's never been around or done anything that dads are supposed to do.

DEB
I know. But one day you're gonna come to me askin' what he was like and if he played basketball and what he did for fun -- and you're gonna have all these questions about why you are who you are. So think of it as me coverin' my ass.

JESSE
Okay.

Deb smiles, tousles Jesse's hair.

EXT. PUBLIC PARK -- ASTON -- AFTERNOON

Deb sits on a park bench watching Jesse plays with TYLER, now 23, and his girlfriend, KAYLEE, 19. Tyler looks skinnier than we remember. His shabby jeans sag halfway down his scrawny ass and his arms and neck are covered in tattoos. He wanders over and sits down beside Deb. Offers her a cigarette.

DEB
I quit.

TYLER
Wish I could.

Tyler lights the cigarette, takes a long drag and exhales.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Thanks for bringin' him.

DEB
He was excited to see you.
(beat)
So you're livin' down in --

TYLER

Florida, yeah. Sober Livin' house for now. But if things go alright Kaylee and me're gonna get our own apartment.

DEB

You two meet down there?

TYLER

(nods)

Treatment center in Destin. Just saw each other and, yunno, just, that was it. Like a firecracker went off. Haven't been apart since.

DEB

She seems really sweet, Tyler. I'm happy for you.

I'm happy for you. Coming from Deb, the words leave a sour taste in Tyler's mouth.

TYLER

You really f'd me up, you know that, Ms. Connor? All that shit you said about me in the news and the papers. 'bout what a piece a trash I was. Everything turned for me after that. I couldn't do nothin' or go nowhere without someone lookin' at me like I was criminal. I swear half the shit I got goin' on with me right now is 'cause a what happened back then.

DEB

(a guilty beat, then)

I'm sorry. I was in a bad place. I lost my daughter. I needed to blame someone. I guess you were just the easy target.

Tyler reaches into his wallet and removes a dog-eared PICTURE OF HIMSELF AND BRIDGET taken when they were teenagers. They're holding one another on a couch, smiling.

TYLER

My mom came down to visit and brought a buncha old pictures.

Deb stares at Bridget's face a moment. She looks happy. Deb smiles, then offers it back --

TYLER (CONT'D)

Nah you keep it. You can even cut me out if you want. I don't care.

DEB

I won't cut you out.
(tucks the photo away)
Thank you.

A long beat.

TYLER

You don't still think I...

DEB

I stopped thinkin' that a long time ago.

They watch Jesse climb across the monkey bars. Kaylee CLAPS.

TYLER

I appreciate you raisin' him.

DEB

I didn't have much choice, did I?

TYLER

(absorbs the jab, then)
Who knows, maybe one day I can put all this shit behind me, come back and be more a part a his life.

Deb manages a smile, not exactly thrilled at the prospect.

TYLER (CONT'D)

He a good kid? I mean, he's not a troublemaker or a smart-ass, is he?

DEB

No. He's a good kid. He's a really good kid.

That warms Tyler. His life hasn't been a total failure.

DEB (CONT'D)

You'll like this. Last week I woke up with a sore throat. At the breakfast table, I said, '*My God, it feels like I swallowed a buncha razor blades.*' I got a call later that he was at school and couldn't stop crying.

(MORE)

DEB (CONT'D)

I said, 'Well ask him what's the matter.' His teacher said, He keeps sayin' his grandmom swallowed razor blades.

TYLER

(laughs, then)

Razor blades. Shit, that is good.

We stay on Deb and Tyler for a few moments as they watch Jesse play.

EXT. PARKING LOT -- PUBLIC PARK -- LATER THAT AFTERNOON

Deb and Jesse climb inside the Ford Taurus. Tyler leans into the passenger window and hands Jesse a grocery store bag filled with loose candy. Must be two pounds worth.

TYLER

That's a little present I picked up on the way over. You like Warheads?

JESSE

Mmm hmm.

TYLER

Got a buncha those in there. Some Nerd Ropes and Lemonheads, too.

Jesse transfers his gaze from the bag to Deb as if asking for instructions on how to accept the gift. Normally she'd tell him to throw out all that junk out. Instead --

DEB

Say thank you.

JESSE

Thank you.

TYLER

You're welcome. Be good and listen to what your Gran says, okay?

JESSE

Okay.

TYLER

I love you.

JESSE

...okay.

Tyler smiles, understanding why the boy didn't say it in return.

DEB

Stay in touch, okay, Tyler?

TYLER

I will. See yas soon, I hope.

KAYLEE

Bye. Nice to meet you guys.

Jesse waves. The Ford rolls away. Jesse watches out the side mirror as Tyler wraps his arms around Kaylee and holds her and he keeps watching until his father disappears from sight.

INT. DEB'S HOUSE -- BRIDGET'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Deb enters, switches on the lights and gazes around. Not a single item has changed in the six years since Bridget disappeared. Same bedding, same stuffed animals, same pictures and posters on the wall. The only additions are a small collection of white vigil candles and a memorial collage which sit, shrine-like, on a shelf above her bed.

Deb crosses to Bridget's desk where a 2003 calendar remains. On it are the notes and squiggles of a conscientious mother mixed in with those of a sad and regretful teenager:

Jesse Dr. Edelson appt @ 2:30PM

Mom's Bday!!! Gift IDEAS!!??...

Homecoming Dance :((sad face)

After a moment Deb takes out the photo Tyler gave to her. She lifts a pair of scissors as if to cut Tyler out, then decides against it and tucks the picture into the mirror frame along with dozens of others of her daughter.

Her gaze shifts from the photos to her reflection in the mirror. Disappointed by the person staring back, she turns, switches off the light and goes.

INT. COCO'S PIZZERIA -- NIGHT

A local pizza and sandwich joint. Deb works nights as a waitress. She drops a pizza and buffalo wings off at a booth filled with a FAMILY.

DEB

Getchas anything else right now?

FATHER
I think we're all set.

DEB
Alright, enjoy.

Deb heads back toward the kitchen when --

MAN'S VOICE (O.C.)
Deb! Yoo-hoo!

She turns to find PAUL, CINDY and two more old CO-WORKERS from Pathmark sitting in a booth. Deb approaches.

DEB
Oh God, this it trouble. I'm makin' sure this crew gets flagged.

PAUL
(wraps his arm around her waist)
Sit. Have a drink with us.

DEB
I can't. I gotta get home.

CINDY
Come on, Deb. How often do we all get together?

Paul tempts her with a pack of cigarettes. Deb sighs, caving.

DEB
Lemme transfer my last two tables. Gimme ten minutes.

EXT. COCO'S PIZZERIA -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Deb sits in the booth with her friends, smoking and laughing and telling old stories. A Waitress brings over another pitcher of beer. Feels like they might stay here all night.

INT. DEB'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- MORNING

Breakfast the next morning. Jesse and Ray sit at the table. Ray's seething as he watches Deb at the range making eggs and buttering toast. Unaware of his foul mood, Deb cheerfully places the bowl of eggs and plate of toast on the table along with the salt and pepper shakers.

DEB
There we go. All set.

Deb sits now. Spoons some eggs onto Jesse's plate. Jesse's about to eat when --

RAY
Don't eat that.

Jesse hesitates, lowers his fork.

DEB
What's the matter? It's gonna get cold.

RAY
What time did you get in last night?

DEB
Last night? I don't know. 11?

RAY
11?

DEB
Maybe later. I don't know. Why?

RAY
It was definitely later.

DEB
(sighs, tired of the third degree)
Some of the girls I used to work with over at Pathmark came in. We sat around catchin' up for a while. Ended up talkin' longer than I expected. Is that okay with you?

RAY
I stayed up til 1:30 waitin' for your ass to get home. Then I drove by Coco's and saw you inside talkin' to some guy.

DEB
Some guy?

RAY
Yeah.

DEB
You mean Paul?

RAY
I don't know his goddamn name.

DEB

Paul's gay. A faggot, that's what you would call him. So if you're worried about me and Paul doin' it you can throw that idea out.

Deb reaches for the spoon. Ray grabs her wrist -- tightly -- then pries the spoon from her grip.

RAY

No one's eatin' 'til I say we're eatin'.

A few moments pass, then, frustrated, fed-up, Deb abruptly reaches into the bowl with her hands and begins shoving fistfuls of eggs into her mouth. One after another until her cheeks puff out. It's as if she's in an ultimate eating competition, racing against the clock to finish the bowl.

Jesse stares at her, wide-eyed, then glances over at Ray, fearful of his reaction.

DEB

(mouth full)

Mmmmmmm. Nice and fluffy. Know what the secret is? A fuckload'a butter.

Ray watches, boiling and boiling until he SNAPS! Grabs the wooden salt shaker and STARTS POUNDING DEB WITH IT! **WHOOMP! WHOOMP! WHOOMP!** She fights back, throwing aimless punches --

DEB (CONT'D)

Stop it! Fuckin' stop you fuck -- !

Jesse attempts to intervene. Ray SHOVES HIM TO THE GROUND. Ray DRAGS Deb out of her chair by her hair and PINS HER UP AGAINST THE WALL. He continues POUNDING ON HER WITH THE SALT SHAKER. Harder. Harder. Harder. Deb SCREAMS OUT IN PAIN.

RAY

Dumb fuckin' bitch! You wanna disrespect me you stupid cunt --

From the ground, Jesse looks up at Ray. His eyes are filled with manic light. Terrified, Jesse RUNS OUT OF THE HOUSE.

INT. KATH'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Kath, Terry, Murph and Patrick sit at the table eating breakfast. The front door swings open. Jesse enters, panting and flushed. Kath registers the terror on his face.

KATH
J, what's going on?

JESSE
Ray's hitting Gran.

Kath jumps out of her seat and lifts the phone off the wall.

KATH
I'm gonna call the police.

Terry stands. Murph moves to follow. Terry calls him off.

TERRY
Stay here!

INT. DEB'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN

Ray's still pounding on Deb. Defeated, she's stopped fighting back at this point. Tear tracks roll down her face.

RAY
You wanna disrespect me you dumb
fuckin' cunt! Huh!? Dumb fuckin' --

Ray hears FOOTSTEPS, turns. *Too late* -- **CRACK!** Terry PUNCHES HIM in the nose! The sound of the blow is hideous, like a broken bat in a baseball game. Blood gushes out of Ray's nose as if a hose has been switched on inside.

RAY (CONT'D)
(looking at the blood
pooling in his hands)
You broke my fuckin' nose!

Ray tries to swing, but Terry's got seventy pounds on him and he doesn't stand a chance. Terry grips him by his shirt, drags him into the bathroom, shoves his head into the toilet and holds him down there.

TERRY
You come within fifteen miles of
this house or Deb or Jesse again
and I will break every bone in your
body. You understand?

Ray TAPS Terry's his wrist over and over: *I give, I give.* Terry relents, pulls Ray's head up. Ray GASPS for air and collapses onto the floor, spent.

KITCHEN

Deb lies on the floor, sobbing, her arms are wrapped her body like a bandage trying to hold her broken self together.

TWO ASTON POLICE OFFICERS rush into the home. One kneels beside Deb while the other continues into the bathroom.

POLICE OFFICER
Miss? Miss, are you okay?

Deb just shakes her head 'no' over and over.

Kath enters, runs to Deb's side and notices the red welts all over her arms and legs.

KATH
Jesus, Deb...

Kath holds her. Off Deb, shaking, trembling in Kath's arms...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WIDENER UNIVERSITY -- FOOTBALL STADIUM -- MORNING

Seven months later. A warm, cloudless early summer day. Hundreds of graduates in cap and gown fill the seats before a dais. Deb is among them.

UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT
(at the podium)
-- Will all of you gathered here
this morning please join me in
congratulating the Widener
University class of 2010!

Caps are tossed into the air. Students hug and celebrate. Deb is alone in all of this, of course. Her age makes her an outsider. She turns to the bleachers where Kath, Terry, Jesse, Murph, Patrick, and Peggy CHEER and FINGER-WHISTLE.

INT./EXT. KATH'S HOUSE -- AFTERNOON -- VARIOUS ANGLES

The graduation party. Balloons and decorations. Friends and family mingle on the porch and backyard drinking beer and wine. Terry grills burgers and hot dogs. Jesse plays Wiffle ball with Murph, Patrick and a pack of neighborhood boys.

INT. KITCHEN

Kath hustles around pulling hors d'oeuvres from the oven, tossing a salad, etc... Deb enters from the side door and immediately grabs a beer from the refrigerator.

DEB

I need to refuel. Aunt Claire's got my ear about her gallstones.

KATH

Yikes.

Peggy enters from the family room with a small gift in hand.

PEGGY

(to Deb)

There you are. I've been looking all over.

DEB

Here I am.

The fact that Peggy seems friendlier now that her daughter's a college graduate isn't lost on Deb.

PEGGY

I gotcha a little something.

DEB

Took the long way, didn't I, Ma?

PEGGY

Which way doesn't matter. You made it.

Deb opens the small box. Inside is a mawkish inspirational picture frame -- **PERSEVERANCE** -- with a photo of a mountain climber hanging by one hand from a cliff ledge.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

You can put it on your new desk. Congratulations, honey.

DEB

Thanks, Ma.

Peggy hugs her, continues out the side door. Deb holds up the picture for Kath to see.

DEB (CONT'D)

That supposed to be me hangin' off'a the mountain there?

KATH

She's proud of you. You should've seen her at Church yesterday. She was bragging to all her friends.

DEB

Maybe if I get a real job she'll have something to brag about.

KATH

You should try calling Nancy Evans. She works over at Hilltop, the assisted living place. She's done real well with that company.

DEB

I'll try anything at this point.

Deb hops up onto the counter, cracks open her beer.

KATH

So you ready to start dating again?

DEB

No. Hell no. Why?

KATH

I might've found someone. He works with Terry. He's cute. And young.

DEB

What do you mean young?

KATH

31.

DEB

Jesus.

KATH

Trust me it wasn't my idea. I know what a pain in the ass you are. He pointed you out.

DEB

What do you mean *he pointed me out*?

KATH

He was over for dinner last week and saw your picture.

DEB

What picture?

KATH
Why's it matter *what picture?*

DEB
Cause what if it's a picture from seven years ago when I was tan and my ass looked good and my tits were standing up? What picture?

Kath pulls a photo off the refrigerator and hands it to Deb. It's recent enough that Deb approves.

DEB (CONT'D)
What's his name?

KATH
Chris McIntyre. Just go out with him once. We can all go together if it's easier.

Deb's thinking. Before she can answer, PAUL and CINDY enter. Paul's holding a bottle of champagne.

PAUL
There she is! Ms. Graduation girl!

They embrace.

INT. LOCAL TAVERN -- A FEW NIGHTS LATER

Deb, Kath, Terry and CHRIS McINTYRE, 31, sit at a booth. Empty pitchers of beer litter the table. Chris is a strong, scruffy, gregarious carpenter. Smarter than he looks. More charming than handsome. He's in the middle of telling a story. Maybe it's the fact that he didn't think to shave. Or that he didn't bother changing out of his work clothes. Whatever the reason, Deb looks utterly disinterested.

CHRIS
-- so we get into the stadium and find our seats and as soon as the game kicks off the guys behind us start with '*f-this and f-that and f-him*'. So I turn and say, '*Listen, fellas, I brought my nephew to his first game. He's nine years old, can you just, yunno, tone it down a notch?*' '*Yeah sure, sorry sorry.*'
Soon as I sit down, guy dumps a full cup'a beer on my head.

No!

KATHY

TERRY
Tell me you knocked him out.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I wanted to, but I got my nephew next to me. So I'm stuck there for the whole game, drenched in beer, freezin' my ass off.

(shakes his head)

Last time I ever do that.

Deb glances at her watch. Kath catches her. So does Chris. He senses the night's a bust, but presses on, undeterred.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

You like football, Deb?

DEB

Not really.

CHRIS

What do you like to do for fun then?

DEB

Sleep. I spend so much time at school or work whenever I have free time I usually just sleep.

CHRIS

Well when you're not tired or workin' what do you like to do?

DEB

I can't remember the last time I wasn't tired or workin'.

Terry and Kath share a look. *Disaster*. Kath intervenes.

KATH

I'm gonna use the restroom. Wanna come with me, Deb?

DEB

No, I'm fine.

Deb smiles cheekily. Kath could burn her right now. She feigns a smile and slides out of the booth.

EXT. KATH'S HOUSE -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Kath's minivan rolls into the drive. The foursome climbs out.

CHRIS

Well it was really nice meetin' ya, Deb.

Chris expects a hug. At least a handshake. Instead --

DEB
Nice to meet you, too.
(to Kath)
Will you send J over?

KATH
(too angry to even speak)
Mmm hmm.

Deb heads across the street to her house. Chris turns back to Terry as if to say: *what was that?*

TERRY
I tried warnin' ya. Like trying to solve a Rubik's cube that one.

CHRIS
(shakes his head)
See ya Monday. See ya Kath.

KATHY
(guiltily)
Sorry, Chris.

Chris walks to his pick-up, dejected, reviewing the night in his head. He looks over at Deb's house and watches her in the kitchen a moment, then climbs into his truck and drives off.

INT. DEB'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Deb's changing into her pajamas when the phone RINGS on the night stand. She answers --

DEB
Hello.

KATH (V.O.)
What the hell was that?

Deb glances out her window. Across the street, she can see into Kath's bedroom. Kath's on the phone.

KATH (V.O.)
You didn't say a thing all night!
You just sat there like a statue!

DEB
Cause I didn't wanna be there.

KATH (V.O.)
Then why'd you go?

DEB
Cause you made me.

KATH (V.O.)
I didn't make you do anything, Deb.
You said --

DEB
I'm tired. I'm goin' to bed.

KATH (V.O.)
He made an effort. He brought you
flowers.

DEB
Ohhhh! Ohhh he bought me flowers.
Well I guess since he spent \$7.50 I
shoulda just spread my legs and let
him do me under the booth.

KATH (V.O.)
You've done it before for less.

Deb SLAMS the phone down, continues getting changed.

DEB
(to herself, pissed-off)
Flowers...hate flowers anyway...
all they do is sit on a table and
die...then smell like shit...

She hears CHUCKLING and looks up to find Jesse standing in
the doorway eating a bowl of ice cream.

DEB (CONT'D)
Go to bed.
(Jesse turns to go)
Wait. What kind is that?

JESSE
Chocolate peanut butter cup.

Deb waves him over and takes a big scoop.

DEB
Go to bed.

Jesse goes. The phone RINGS again. Deb groans, answers --

DEB (CONT'D)
It's not a match, okay?!

KATH
What was wrong with him?

DEB
A lotta things.

KATH
Like?

DEB
Like I didn't find him attractive.
Like if he actually wanted to make
an impression he wouldn't'a dressed
in his goddamn work clothes.

KATH
So he's a bad dresser. Kill him.

DEB
G'night.

KATH
He thought you were too old anyway.

Kath hangs up. Deb's left holding the phone, contemplating those words. *Too old...* She dials Kath back. Busy signal. She moves to the window. Across the street Kath turns her bedroom light off. Deb howls with frustration.

INT. COCO'S PIZZERIA -- A FEW NIGHTS LATER

Chris enters and approaches the hostess stand.

HOSTESS
How many?

CHRIS
Just me again.

As Hostess escorts Chris to a booth, he notices Deb working across the restaurant.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Actually can I take the booth over
there?

Hostess sits Chris in Deb's section. He watches her until she heads in his direction, then he pretends to review the menu.

DEB
Getcha started with a drink?

CHRIS
Uhh Bud draft, please.
(looks up at Deb, feigns
surprise)
(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Oh. Hey, Deb. I didn't know you worked here.

DEB

Cut the crap. I saw you ask for my section. What do you want?

CHRIS

(smiles: *tough broad*)

Gimme a cheesesteak, fried onions --

DEB

I mean what do you want? I'm 38-years-old, raising a seven-year-old boy. If you're lookin' for a party girl or a fling or someone to have some fun with, just keep lookin'.

CHRIS

It just so happens I'm in the market for a 38-year-old waitress with a seven-year-old grandson who doesn't wanna have any fun.

Deb studies him a moment, her bullshit meter getting a read.

DEB

A lotta guys are charming til they lock you down then that charm jumps out the window.

CHRIS

Not me. I got charm for years.

DEB

Is that right?

CHRIS

Decades probably.

Deb seems to be coming around slightly, though she isn't letting him know.

DEB

Bud draft and a cheesesteak with fried onions?

CHRIS

Mmm hmm.

DEB

Ketchup?

CHRIS

Hell yes.

DEB

Pick me up at seven on Saturday.

Deb goes. Chris watches her, smiling, feeling damn good about how that went.

INT. DEB'S HOUSE -- SATURDAY NIGHT

The front door opens. Deb and Chris enter, returning from a date. He's made an effort with his wardrobe this time: tan Dockers and an LL Bean button-down. And he shaved. Deb hangs up her coat, moves into the kitchen and lifts the wall phone. Chris remains in the family room perusing family photos.

DEB

(on the phone with Kath)

Hey it's me... We just got home.
Send J over... It was good... Can
we talk about his tomorrow cause
he's standin' right in frunna me
and I'd rather wait til he's gone
to tell you what an awful date he
was...

Chris glowers at her playfully.

DEB (CONT'D)

Bye.

Deb hangs up the phone.

DEB (CONT'D)

I'm gonna use the restroom. Don't
get too comfortable. You're not
staying long.

CHRIS

That's fine. I got another date
anyway.

Deb smiles, wanders off. Alone, Chris lifts a framed photo off the console: Bridget, 13 here, bathing an infant Jesse. The front door opens, startling Chris who quickly replaces the photograph and turns back to find Jesse entering.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Hey. I'm Chris.

Cautious of new men in the house, Jesse waves but is careful to keep his distance. Deb returns from the bathroom.

DEB
J, this is Chris.

CHRIS
Yeah, we just met.

DEB
Go up and get in the shower, ok?
Thirty minutes of tv in my room --

JESSE
But --

DEB
But nothing. Thirty minutes. Go.

CHRIS
Nice to meet you.

Jesse ignores Chris, heads up the stairs.

DEB
Want a beer?

CHRIS
Why not.

They head into the kitchen. Deb removes two bottles of Rolling Rock and they sit at the kitchen table. She looks over his outfit.

DEB
So did Kath make you dress up?

CHRIS
She mentioned something about maybe changin' up my wardrobe for better results.

Deb laughs. Something's on Chris' mind, but he isn't sure how to broach the subject. Finally --

CHRIS (CONT'D)
She uhhh, she told me about your daughter, Deb. I'm real sorry.
(Deb nods: *thank you*)
If you don't mind me askin'. Did the police ever come up with a theory? I mean, do they think she just ran off or...?

DEB
My daughter's dead. I knew it twelve hours after she was gone.
(MORE)

DEB (CONT'D)

Just didn't make any sense that she would run off for no reason.

CHRIS

But they never...?

DEB

They never found her body if that's what you're asking.

Deb fishes a cigarette out of her purse, lights it.

DEB (CONT'D)

I don't smoke anymore. Just every now and then I get the urge.

CHRIS

I'm sorry, if you don't wanna talk about it.

DEB

No it's fine. Prolly good for me... About a month after she went missin' a woman from Marcus Hook came forward sayin' she saw Bridget -- or a girl she thought was Bridget -- talkin' to a man in a grey sedan out there off'a Ridge Road. Which would have made sense if she was walkin' back from her friend's house. She didn't get a license plate and couldn't tell what the man looked like, but she was pretty sure it was Bridg. Two more people confirmed they saw the same car out there that night. So my guess is whoever he was...

Her voice trails off. The next thought too hard. She smokes for a moment. Tears well up in her eyes.

DEB (CONT'D)

There were some leads over the years. A name would pop up, police would do their thing, but...

(shakes her head: they never panned out. A long beat, then)

It's the not knowing that drives ya crazy. Just thinkin' about your kid out there all alone. Thinkin' about how scared she was. I think about that a lot.

(MORE)

DEB (CONT'D)

That time a year and how dark and cold it is... God, she must have been so scared all alone.

Tears are rolling down her face now.

DEB (CONT'D)

I'll tell ya what, she didn't go easy. She was a fighter and she loved her son and whoever the hell did it got the fight a his life before he took her.

(another drag, big exhale)
I know that much.

She clears away a few tears, composes herself.

CHRIS

Kath said you were a great mother.

DEB

(chuckles at that)
Bullshit. I was a young mother. Sixteen years old. Slept with some guy two times and that was it.

CHRIS

First boyfriend?

DEB

First everything. He asked me to get an abortion. I scheduled the appointment but couldn't go through with it. I wanted her too bad... I was so nervous I slept on her bedroom floor every night for the first year. I'd wake up every ten minutes and feel her chest just to make sure she was breathin'.

Chris stares at her, moved by her openness and vulnerability.

CHRIS

I don't know how you made it through all'a that.

DEB

I almost didn't. After it happened they put me on pills for the depression. I didn't know who I was half'a the time. One morning I woke up and started screamin' that I was on fire. I thought my skin was burnin' off.

(MORE)

DEB (CONT'D)

I ran into the street and took all'a my clothes off and... Kath called an ambulance... I was in a treatment center for awhile. Jesse had to go and live with Terry and Kath... Some dark days.

CHRIS

But you made it back.

DEB

(a dark chuckle)
Back to what? That's the question.

CHRIS

Better days.

He reaches across the table and takes her hands in his.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Me.

She looks up at him. He seems so confident she could almost believe it herself.

EXT. PATHMARK GROCERY STORE -- NIGHT

Deb and Jesse load groceries into the trunk, then climb into the Ford. Deb glances to her left and sees a YELLOW JEEP WRANGLER parked beside them. She recognizes it as MR. WALTERS', her arrogant college computer class professor.

DEB

Wait here. I forgot something.
(offers her cell phone)
Here. Play a game.

Jesse begins tapping away on the keys.

Deb exits the car. Opens the trunk and searches through the grocery bags for the EGG CARTON. Looks around the parking lot. Empty. Dark. She FIRES one egg into the open Jeep. It SPLATTERS onto the steering wheel. She looks around again. FIRES another. Then another. Until six eggs are splattered all over the inside of the Jeep. She replaces the carton and closes the trunk. Hurries back into the driver's seat.

JESSE

Did you find it?

DEB

Yeah it's in there.

She reverses in a hurry and races out of the lot, a smile slowly curling to life on her face.

INT. DEB'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Second date for Deb and Chris. She cooked dinner this time and they sit at the kitchen table eating.

DEB

How do you like workin' for Terry?

CHRIS

I like it. Like bein' outside, workin' with my hands. Terry's a good boss. It's not how I imagined my life shakin' out, but...

DEB

How'd you imagine it shakin' out?

CHRIS

Oh I thought I was gonna be a rock and roll star.

DEB

Is that right?

CHRIS

Me and some buddies back in Allentown had a cover band goin' for awhile. Steelworkers Sons, that's what we called ourselves.

DEB

Were you any good?

CHRIS

Better than good. We were great.
(Deb smiles)
We did the Jersey shore tour for a few years. Point Pleasant all the way down to Wildwood.

DEB

All the girls would throw themselves at you?

CHRIS

Oh yeah. I'd walk off the stage every night with a trash bag fulla panties.

She playfully tosses her napkin at him. He smiles.

DEB
Sing something for me.

CHRIS
I stopped singing a long time ago.

DEB
Please?

CHRIS
I don't sing for free. In our prime
we were chargin' at least a two,
three dollar cover charge.

She reaches for her purse.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Dance with me and we'll call it
even.

DEB
I don't dance.

CHRIS
Then I don't sing.

It's a standoff. They stare at one another for a moment.
Finally, Chris stands and offers his hand. Deb hesitates,
then reluctantly accepts. They begin to slow-dance.

DEB
I thought you were gonna sing.

CHRIS
I am. I'm just figurin' out what
song. I got one shot at this thing.
Don't wanna blow it.

Finally he SINGS. Softly, sweetly. Damn good, too.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
*Well it's Saturday night/
You're all dressed up in blue/
I been watching you awhile/
Maybe you been watching me too/
So somebody ran out/
Left somebody's heart in a mess/
Well if you're looking for love/
Honey I'm tougher than the rest/*

She looks up at him: *oh yeah?*

He nods back: *damn right I am.*

As he continues to sing, Deb rests her head on his shoulder. It feels good to be in his arms. *Safe*. It feels like the first good thing she's had in a long time.

INT. DEB'S MASTER BATHROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Deb stands before the mirror gargling mouthwash. She spits it out, then raises her eyes and stares at her reflection in the mirror. She seems uncharacteristically nervous.

She opens the door slightly and peeks out at Chris sitting on the bed, waiting for her. Closes the door again and turns back to the mirror. Lifts up her blouse and appraises her breasts. Not what they used to be. She pushes them up, but they quickly droop back down. That's it. She's lost her nerve and begins rehearsing ways to get him to leave.

DEB

(to herself)

Ugh, I'm not feeling well... I know
it just came on all of a sudden...
No no, I'll be fine, you go home...

The door swings open startling her. It's Chris. He pulls her close and kisses her deeply, passionately. Finally, he breaks the embrace.

CHRIS

Sorry. I couldn't wait any longer.

He looks at her, confident his gambit has won her over. Instead, she stares up at him looking as vulnerable as an injured mouse. He adjusts, leans close.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I won't hurt you, Deb.

Her fear recedes. She pulls him close, kisses him. He lifts her off the sink and carries her out of the bathroom. She clings to him desperately, like she'll drown if she lets go.

INT. DEB'S BEDROOM -- MINUTES LATER

They make love. Slowly.

He looks into her eyes. She looks right back.

Love isn't much more.

EXT. DEB'S BACKYARD -- FOLLOWING MORNING

Deb exits the home in her pajamas. She's glowing: the first sensations of love blooming within her. She arrives at the rabbit hutch, fills the feeder with food, then replaces it when she notices the rabbit isn't moving.

DEB
(nudging the animal)
Hey. Clover. Clover?

Still nothing. Deb opens the cage and lifts the rabbit out. It's limp, dead.

INT. DEB'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Deb snuggles up beside a sleeping Chris. He stirs, looks over at her, smiles.

CHRIS
G'morning.

DEB
Morning. I need your help.

EXT. DEB'S BACKYARD -- LATER THAT MORNING

Deb and Jesse stand beside Chris as he dumps the final shovelful of dirt onto the rabbit's small grave.

CHRIS
Should we say a few words?

Deb tries to muster something, but is overcome by emotion.

DEB
...I'm sorry...she was Bridget's
rabbit...

Chris pulls her close, looks at Jesse. Jesse thinks for a moment, then:

JESSE
Bye, Clover. I hope you were happy
here. Say hi to my mom if you see
her.

Moved, Deb smiles through her tears.

CHRIS
Amen to that.

DEB

Amen.

Deb leans her head on Chris' shoulder. Off the two of them standing before the grave --

MUSIC UP: *Van Morrison 'Queen of the Slipstream'* --

EXT. KING'S MILL -- SUMMER AFTERNOON -- ONE YEAR LATER

Twilight at a local banquet facility. Old stone and ivy theme. A patio overlooks a small waterfall. Seats have been arranged before a wooden arbor. CHRIS, in his groom tuxedo, stands beside Terry, Jesse and the other GROOMSMEN.

The guests turn as Deb is escorted down the aisle by Murph and Patrick. She's wearing a surprisingly understated lace gown and veil. She arrives at the arbor, hugs both boys, then joins hands with Chris who marvels at his bride.

CHRIS

Wow.

Unable to contain her joy, Deb pulls Chris close and kisses him. Guests laugh, CLAP.

OFFICIANT

Well now that that's out of the way. Good afternoon everyone.

INT. KING'S MILL RECEPTION HALL -- NIGHT

ON A DJ holding a microphone --

DJ

Please join me in welcoming the new Mr. and Mrs. Chris McIntyre!

WHIP TO -- Deb and Chris entering the hall to the CHEERS of the guests. Chris scoops Deb up into his arms.

LATER

The garter ceremony. Deb sits in a chair in the center of the dance floor. Guests have gathered around. Chris buries his head beneath her gown and emerges moments later with the garter hanging from his teeth like an obedient dog.

Deb jokingly pushes his head back under his dress: *stay down there for a while*. GUESTS laugh. Peggy rolls her eyes.

EXT. KING'S MILL RECEPTION HALL -- NIGHT

The reception's over and the DRUNKEN GUESTS spill out of the reception hall carrying Deb and Chris on their shoulders. They head across the street, SINGING and DANCING as they disappear inside O'Flaherty's Pub.

EXT. DEB'S HOUSE -- SOME DAYS LATER -- SUMMER MORNING

Chris loads luggage into the back of his Ford Mustang while Deb hugs Kath, Terry and finally Jesse. They're setting off on their honeymoon.

DEB

Call me if you need anything.

KATH

We're not gonna need anything. Go.
Have fun.

Deb hugs Jesse again, kisses him --

DEB

I love you I love you I love you.

CHRIS

See ya in a few days.

Deb and Chris climb into the Mustang and cruise off.

INT. FORD MUSTANG, DRIVING -- AC EXPRESSWAY -- DAY

Deb has the passenger window down. The wind's in her hair. A top-down CONVERTIBLE filled TEENAGE GIRLS roars by. *SENIOR WEEK 2009* has been written on the side of the car.

Deb smiles, remembering those carefree days.

INT. THE SPINNAKER CONDOS -- SEA ISLE CITY, NJ -- TWILIGHT

A dated high-rise on the water. Seashell and driftwood decor. Chris carries their luggage in while Deb glides out to the balcony and breathes in the sea air.

Chris comes up behind her, wraps his arms around her waist.

EXT. OCEAN CITY BOARDWALK -- NIGHT -- VARIOUS SHOTS

Deb and Chris stroll the boardwalk.

-- They share a funnel cake.

-- In a souvenir store, Deb tries on a pair of goofy sunglasses and shows them off to Chris.

-- They ride the 'Salt-and-Pepper' shakers: two enclosed cars which swing in a loop. Deb screams like a teenage girl. Chris can't stop laughing.

EXT. BEACH -- TWILIGHT

The sun is nearly gone and the beach is nearly empty.

Deb steps out of the water and dries off with a towel. It's chilly in the gloaming and she slides on a hooded sweatshirt and tucks her hands inside the sleeves and sits down on the sand and pulls her knees up against her chest.

The Van Morrison SONG FADES OUT, replaced by the gentle, rhythmic sound of waves crashing onto the sand.

Deb watches Chris swim and dive through the rough waves. Her strong, intrepid man. The one who taught her to love again.

Her eyes take on a faraway look.

Then, as if a voice inside her head (*Bridget's?*) tells her it's okay to enjoy this, to be happy again, she smiles.

FADE OUT.

EXT. DEB'S HOUSE -- FALL -- NIGHT

The home's been painted. New shutters and a new front door have been installed. Chris' Chevy Camaro is parked in the drive. The television glows in the family room.

SUPER: 2014

Deb's Ford rolls into the drive. She climbs out with a bag of take-out and enters the home. The kitchen light goes on.

INT. DEB'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Deb, 43 now, unpacks the take-out. She wears glasses, her hair's shorter, and the pantsuit she's wearing -- more formal and conservative than anything she's worn before -- suggests she's found a career. A basketball game broadcast can be heard in the family room.

DEB
Guys. Dinner. I picked up
cheesesteaks from Laspada's.

No response. Deb marches into the family room where CHRIS, 36 now, and JESSE, 13 now, anxiously watch the closing moments of a college basketball game on ESPN.

DEB (CONT'D)
Dinner's up. Move your butts.

CHRIS
Last play, babe.

JESSE
Six seconds left.

Deb SIGHS, returns to the kitchen and plates the food. We hear a small celebration in the family room, then Chris and Jesse enter the kitchen.

JESSE
You missed it, Gran. Nova hit a
jumper at the buzzer.

CHRIS
Unbelievable finish. Whaddaya want
to drink, babe?

DEB
I'm fine with water.

Chris comes up behind Deb, kisses her. They've been married for five years, and they've been happy years, but the fire doesn't burn as brightly as it used to and they've settled into a life of routine.

Chris sets the drinks down on the table. Everyone sits.

DEB (CONT'D)
How was school?

JESSE
Boring.

DEB
Did you get your science test back?

JESSE
A minus.

DEB
See? And you didn't think you were
gonna do well.

CHRIS
Pass the ketchup, please.

Deb passes the bottle over to Chris. It's nearly empty and he squeezes it over and over making absurd FART noises. She glares at him: one of his annoying qualities.

DEB

So are you going to the dance next week?

CHRIS

What dance next week?

DEB

There's a Harvest Mixer at the high school. Mrs. Kiefer asked me to chaperone, but she said J hadn't bought his ticket yet.

CHRIS

Why didn't ya buy a ticket, bud?

JESSE

I don't know. Dances aren't really my thing.

CHRIS

Aren't really your thing? Girls. Slow-dancing. Making out.

DEB

Not making out.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

That's every guy's thing.

Jesse shrugs.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Well, if ya want any lessons let me know. Back when I was in school the girls used to refer to me as The Grind King.

JESSE

The Grind King?

CHRIS

Yeah, yunno, grinding.
(Jesse's confused)
You don't know what grinding is?

DEB

And he doesn't need to.

Chris stands and dances up against Deb, rubbing his pelvis up against her. Jesse LAUGHS. Deb fights off a smile.

CHRIS

Press up against her real close so she knows what you got goin' on down there.

DEB

Okay. We get the idea. You can sit down now, Grind King.

Chris sits.

DEB (CONT'D)

(to Jesse)

Well I think you should go. A lot of girls are gonna be disappointed if you don't show up.

JESSE

Yeah right.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Deb sits up in bed on her laptop, filling in an Excel spreadsheet for work. Chris watches the local news.

CHRIS

What time you guys takin' off on Saturday?

DEB

Early. The game starts at 5:00. Sure you can't come with us?

CHRIS

I wish. I got that project out on Providence Road. That flip I'm helpin' Drew and Matt with.

DEB

(rubs his face)

You're working too hard.

CHRIS

Christmas cash. Or maybe a trip this Spring. Somewhere warm.

DEB

Mmmm. Warm. That sounds good.

CHRIS

(kisses her)

I'm gonna hit it. Love you.

DEB

Love you.

Chris shuts off his light, rolls over. Deb returns to her spreadsheet when she overhears on the television --

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

...It's been four days since Amanda Butler was last seen and the missing girl's parents are asking the community for help.

Deb looks up. On the tv, a grief-stricken father and mother -- MIKE and SARAH BUTLER, 30s -- appear before reporters.

SARAH BUTLER

Amanda's a good girl. A good big sister. And we're just begging anyone with any information to please come forward and help us bring our precious girl home.

The segment ends, but Deb's still staring at the tv, those old wounds never fully healed.

INT. HILLTOP ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY -- ASTON -- MORNING

Deb addresses a group of 50 EMPLOYEES -- Nurses, Cafeteria, Administrative and Maintenance staff. She's the executive director of the facility. A good one, too. Fair, responsible, an advocate for her employees.

DEB

Has everyone had a chance to look over the benefits proposal then?

EMPLOYEE ONE

Are they seriously makin' me change my primary doctor again?

EMPLOYEE TWO

Where's the orthodontia? They're takin' that from us now, too?

More EMPLOYEES grumble. Deb cuts through the noise.

DEB

Listen up. What we need to do is come up with a list of things that are important to us. Shawna drew up a form for you to fill out.

(MORE)

DEB (CONT'D)

Once I get those responses I'm gonna put together a list of benefits we aren't willing to let go of and I'll present it to corporate. Don't expect a miracle. We know how cheap these people are. But if we're smart, and if we stand together, we'll find a middle ground. Okay? Sound good?

Nods all around. SHAWNA, 50, black, Deb's diligent Assistant Director, stands and begins passing out forms.

SHAWNA

Try and get these back to me by end of the day, please.

INT. HILLTOP ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY -- CAFETERIA -- NIGHT

Deb moves down the buffet line, filling a dinner plate. She waves to a few RESIDENTS and EMPLOYEES on her way out.

INT. HILLTOP ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY -- HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Deb carries the food tray down the hall and pauses at a resident's door. She KNOCKS.

DEB

Ma? Ma, you in here?

No answer, so Deb enters --

INT. PEGGY'S ONE-BEDROOM SUITE

DEB

Ma?

PEGGY (O.C.)

(from the bedroom)

I'll be right out.

Deb sets the tray down and looks around the condo. Boxes on the floor suggest Peggy's still in the process of moving in.

DEB

Place is starting to come together.

PEGGY (O.C.)

I can't hear you, sweetie.

Deb approaches the mantel. On it are pictures of Peggy's grandchildren including Bridget, rosary beads, and a mass card for **EDWARD JOSEPH CONNOR**, Deb's father. Deb lifts the card off the mantel and regards it a moment. He's a handsome man with an easy smile. If Kath takes after her mother, Deb is her father's twin.

The bedroom door opens and Peggy exits. She suffered a stroke last year and walks slowly now with the aid of a walker. The right side of her mouth droops slightly and she's lost function in her left arm.

DEB
How ya feelin'?

PEGGY
Ah. One step up, two steps back.
(sees the food tray)
What's for dinner?

DEB
Tomato basil soup and roasted chicken.

Peggy lifts two Hallmark cards from the counter and hands them to Deb.

PEGGY
I wanted to give you these for your trip. One's for Murph's birthday and there's some spending money in the other for Patrick.

DEB
You mean beer money.

PEGGY
Well, that's his decision.

Deb aids Peggy down onto the couch. Moves a tray table close and sets the dinner down on top. Switches on the tv now: *Wheel of Fortune*.

DEB
Sure you don't wanna come with us?

PEGGY
Oh no. I'll just be a burden.
Supposed to be cold anyway.

DEB
Alright, well, I'm gonna get going.
Need anything else?

PEGGY
No, I'm fine.

DEB
I'll see ya Monday, ma. Love you.

PEGGY
Love you, too.

Deb heads for the door, then turns back and watches Peggy struggle to eat her soup. Her hand shaking as she raises the spoon to her mouth. For a moment Deb considers offering help, but she knows her mother's too proud and she exits.

EXT. DEB'S HOUSE -- DRIVEWAY -- PRE-DAWN

Terry loads Deb's duffle bag into the minivan while Deb and Jesse say goodbye to Chris. They're taking a road trip to see Murph's college football game.

CHRIS
(to Jesse)
See ya, bud. I'll look for ya in
the stands, alright.
(hugs Deb now)
Call me when you get there.

DEB
(squeezes him tight)
Sure you can't come?

CHRIS
Somewhere warm, remember?

DEB
(kisses him)
Don't work too hard. Love you.

CHRIS
Love you, too.

They load into the minivan. Chris watches them drive off.

INT. KATH'S MINIVAN, DRIVING -- OHIO TURNPIKE -- MORNING

Terry drives. Kath's in the passenger seat. Deb sits in one of the middle seats staring out her window at the passing farmland and towering maple trees with their blazing gold and auburn leaves, so beautiful this time of year. It feels good to be away, out of her routine, experiencing things.

KATH

Hey J. Murph said he's gonna take you into the locker room to meet the players after the game.

Deb turns back to Jesse lounging in the back row. He brightens at the prospect.

INT. REST STOP SHOP -- OHIO TURNPIKE -- AFTERNOON

Deb peruses the candy section when she notices a YOUNG WOMAN, 20, in the neighboring aisle. She's a runaway. Grimy hair, shabby sweatshirt, overstuffed knapsack. She has her back to Deb, but something about the girl -- *her shape? her hair?* -- reminds Deb of Bridget. *Could it possibly be?*

Deb meanders into the neighboring aisle and approaches Woman, trying to steal a glimpse of her face. Finally, feeling vaguely threatened by Deb standing behind her, Woman turns.

Deb holds her breath and...

...it's not Bridget.

Young Woman shuffles off.

Deb exhales. Feels silly for letting herself believe it.

INT. KATH'S MINIVAN -- UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME -- AFTERNOON

The minivan passes through an entrance gate onto the University of Notre Dame campus. Some students are setting up tailgates. Jesse sits up in the back row, taking it all in.

JESSE

Look, Gran! There's the stadium!

EXT. LOURDES GROTTO -- NOTRE DAME CAMPUS -- AFTERNOON

A replica of the famed French shrine where the Virgin Mary appeared to Saint Bernadette. Visitors light candles and kneel before a statue of Mary offering prayers. Terry and Kath take their turn. Deb and Jesse watch from a distance.

JESSE

What are they doing?

DEB

You light a candle and say a prayer for someone.

Jesse watches the visitors kneel before the altar, mesmerized by solemnity of the place.

JESSE

Can I say one?

The request catches Deb off-guard. Jesse's never shown an interest in religion and she's certainly never steered him in its direction.

DEB

Sure. Yeah. Listen just 'cause I don't do all that religion stuff doesn't mean you can't.

JESSE

What do I say?

DEB

Well, it's been awhile, but I don't remember there bein' any right or wrong way about it.

JESSE

Do you wanna come with me?

DEB

No.

JESSE

Why not?

DEB

Cause I'm mad at God.

JESSE

Why?

DEB

He took your mother away from me. And until he gives her back we're not on speaking terms... Go 'head. I'll stay here.

Deb watches Jesse approach the grotto. He lights a candle, sets it among the others, then kneels before the statue of Mary. Unsure what to do next, he watches the woman beside him bless herself. He tries to mimic the movement and only half-succeeds. Deb smiles.

BOY'S VOICE (O.C.)

Aunt Deb!

Deb turns to find PATRICK, 18 now, and Murph's girlfriend, COLLEEN, 21 now, approaching, duffle bags in hand. They've made the trip out for the game as well. Patrick wraps Deb up in a great bearhug and lifts her off the ground.

DEB
When did ya get in?

PATRICK
Train got to Chicago at 1:00pm.

DEB
How's college?

PATRICK
Pretty amazing.

DEB
Your mom thinks you're drinking too much.

PATRICK
Is that a bad thing?

Deb smiles, hugs Colleen now.

DEB
How are ya, Coll?

COLLEEN
Hi, Deb. Where's J?

DEB
(points to Jesse, still kneeling)
Kath's rubbing off on him unfortunately.

MUSIC RISES! -- THE ROWDY SOUNDS OF A MARCHING BAND --

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME CAMPUS -- AFTERNOON

Students and visitors have gathered in the quad as the FOOTBALL TEAM, dressed in their game uniforms and helmets, passes through on its way to the stadium. The family searches for Murph. Jesse spots him first.

JESSE
There's Murph!

ALL TOGETHER
Murph! Murph, over here!

MURPH, 21, a tall, strong linebacker, glances in their direction, waves.

EXT. NOTRE DAME STADIUM -- TWILIGHT

Bundled inside layers, wearing mittens and knit caps, the family watches the football game.

On the field, Murph SACKS the quarterback. The CROWD CHEERS! Patrick and Terry high-five!

PA ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Murph Tate with the sack! It will
bring up fourth down for Stanford.

INT. NOTRE DAME LOCKER ROOM -- POST-GAME -- NIGHT

Deb watches at a distance as Murph leads Jesse around the locker room introducing him to the Notre Dame players. Jesse's his usual shy self, but he can't hide his smile.

MURPH
(to a PLAYER)
This is my cousin. This guy's gonna
be playing your position one day.

Jesse coyly shakes Player's hand.

INT. SOUTH BEND BAR -- NIGHT

Post-victory celebration. Terry and Kath are chatting with some other PLAYERS' PARENTS while Jesse, Patrick, Murph and Colleen play a game of shuffleboard.

Tired, sitting alone at a high-top, Deb stands and slips her purse off the stool. She approaches Kath.

DEB
I'm gonna hit it.

KATH
Already? Stay for one more drink.

DEB
Nah, I'm beat.
(re: Jesse)
Make sure he gets back to the
hotel.

Deb hugs Kath, then heads out of the bar.

INT. DAYS INN HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Deb lies in bed on her cell phone. The call goes to Chris' VOICEMAIL.

DEB

It's just me. You're probably asleep. Just wanted to say g'night. You should've seen J. Murph introduced him to all the players. He was in his glory. Anyway, miss you. Love you.

Deb hangs up the phone, switches off the light.

INT. DEB'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- A FEW MORNINGS LATER

Deb's on the portable phone with a CUSTOMER SERVICE REP. Jesse and Chris sit at the kitchen table eating breakfast.

DEB

-- I'm being charged for something that I returned two months ago... The account number?... Chris, where's the Sears bill?

CHRIS

Shit I mighta thrown it out.

DEB

(annoyed)
When?

CHRIS

Yesterday, I think.

Deb heads into the GARAGE, opens the trash can and begins digging through, searching for the bill. She pauses at a SMALL GROCERY BAG buried (or *hidden?*) beneath larger bags. Inside Deb notices small liquor bottles.

CUSTOMER SERVICE REP (V.O.)

Maam, are you still there?

Deb tears the bag open. Along with the liquor bottles she sees cigarette butts. With lipstick on them. Not hers.

CUSTOMER SERVICE REP (V.O.)

Maam...?

Deb hangs up the phone, her head spinning.

INT. HILLTOP ASSISTED LIVING -- DEB'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Deb sits at her desk in a fog, turning that trash bag over in her mind, trying to convince herself it's something other than what it appears to be.

A KNOCK at the door. Shawna peeks in.

SHAWNA

I finished that benefits list.

DEB

Thanks. Just uhh, put it in the bin there.

Shawna drops the document in the bin. She senses Deb is off.

SHAWNA

Feelin' okay?

DEB

Yeah, just...tired that's all.

Shawna goes. Deb's cell PHONE RINGS. '**Chris calling...**' She hesitates for a moment then decides to answer --

DEB (CONT'D)

Hi... Okay, what time will you be home?... Okay...

(choking on it)

Love you, too.

Deb hangs up, reaches for her car keys.

EXT. HILLTOP ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY -- AFTERNOON

Deb hustles across the lot and climbs into her Ford.

INT. DEB'S FORD TAURUS -- LATE AFTERNOON

Deb's parked on a residential street, staring at a home under construction. Chris leaves the work site, loads his carpenter tools into his Camaro and drives off.

INT. DEB'S FORD TAURUS -- TWILIGHT -- VARIOUS ANGLES AS

Deb follows Chris' Camaro through the town streets until it turns into residential community... she parks at a distance as the Camaro pulls into a driveway...

Deb watches Chris approach the front door of a home. A pretty YOUNG WOMAN, 32, answers, smoking a cigarette. She hugs Chris, jumps into his arms and wraps her legs around him as he carries her into the home and closes the door behind them.

Deb reacts numbly, her heart quietly shattering inside her chest. She sits, anesthetized, for a few moments until a PACK OF KIDS WHIZ BY on roller skates. The GIGGLING pulls her from her trance. She takes a few deep breaths. Then starts the car and slowly drives off.

INT. DEB'S HOUSE -- MASTER BEDROOM -- NIGHT

WHOOSH – WHOOSH – WHOOSH -- dresser drawers fly open as Deb grabs Chris' clothes and messily stuffs them into a suitcase. Jesse's heard the commotion and appears at the doorway.

JESSE

What are you doing?

DEB

Giving him a few days worth a clothes. The rest he can come back for while I'm not here.

JESSE

...you're throwing him out?

DEB

Mmm hmm.

Deb stomps into the bathroom. Jesse follows.

JESSE

What for?

DEB

For lying.

JESSE

About what?

DEB

About fucking everything!

She extends her arms across the sinktop and -- like a poker player bringing in an enormous pot -- sweeps Chris' toiletries into the suitcase and zips it shut.

EXT. DEB'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Two packed suitcases sit on the front step.

INT. KITCHEN/STAIRWELL -- NIGHT

Frazzled, Deb sits at the kitchen table waiting for Chris to get home. She's smoking a cigarette and tapping her sneaker on the floor.

Unbeknownst to Deb, Jesse sits in the stairwell.

Headlights sweep across the front windows. Deb stubs out her cigarette and steels her nerves. The front door opens. Chris enters, hangs up his flannel coat, and looks in at Deb.

CHRIS

Hey.

DEB

Hey.

CHRIS

What's with the suitcases?

DEB

How long's it been going on?

CHRIS

Been going on...?

DEB

I saw you today. At her house. I saw her wrap her legs around you.

A look of resignation appears on Chris' face.

DEB (CONT'D)

Just tell me the truth. How long?
(no response. Deb shakes
her head)

Do you really want me to yell and
scream and start breakin' shit?

Still no response. Deb FIRES her wine glass against the wall. It SHATTERS! Deb looks back at Chris: *how long?*

CHRIS

Six months.

DEB

Why?

CHRIS

Deb --

DEB

WHY!? What didn't I give you?!

As Chris searches for an answer he hears a CREAKING noise and glances up at Jesse standing in the stairwell.

CHRIS
Hey. Hey, bud.

JESSE
What did you do?

Chris won't lie to Jesse. Can't. A very long beat.

CHRIS
I'm just...I'm gonna go away for a little while.

JESSE
Why?

Chris turns back to Deb. She's staring out the window, too hurt and betrayed to even look at him any longer. Ashamed, Chris turns and exits the home. The door shuts.

A few moments pass. There are no tears from Deb. No screaming or shouting. Instead, she simply retrieves a broom and a dustpan and begins to sweep up the shards of glass.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DEB'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- THE FOLLOWING NIGHT

Deb, dressed in a sweatshirt and Levis, loads the dishwasher. Kath sits at the kitchen table drinking a Rolling Rock.

KATH
Who is she?

DEB
I don't know. She lives over in Media. She's young.

KATH
Pretty?

DEB
Mmm hmm. Nice tits, too.

KATH
Shit.

DEB
Really nice tits.

KATH

Well you're not crying. That's good.

DEB

I will eventually. It'll all come gushing out at some point. Right now I'm too tired. And I promised I'd chaperone this damn thing.

Jesse comes down the stairs dressed for the Harvest Mixer. He looks sharp: Dockers and a plaid shirt. Kath WHISTLES.

KATH

Whoa. Look at you. So handsome.

Jesse, still crestfallen over Chris' exile, miserably slides on his coat.

JESSE

(to Deb)

Do we have to stay the whole time?

INT. FORD TAURUS, MOVING -- NIGHT

Deb drives. Jesse's dejected, quiet.

DEB

You look nice.

JESSE

Thanks.

DEB

You're not gonna tell me I look pretty?

JESSE

(perfunctorily)

You look pretty.

DEB

Just pretty? Not drop-dead or stunning or beautiful?

Deb chuckles. Not Jesse.

INT. SUN VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL -- GYMNASIUM -- NIGHT

Harvest theme. Buffet table of fruit, turkey-shaped cookies and apple cider. 150 eighth graders mingle in cliques.

Deb stands by the bleachers with the other moms. They all know each other and share a familiar, easy rapport. Deb sits off to the side, alone and feeling a little left out. She watches Jesse chat with his friends. All guys, of course. He's too introverted to mingle with the girls.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.C.)

Excuse me.

Deb turns to a WOMAN, 40s, standing before her.

WOMAN

Are you Ms. Connor?

DEB

Yes...

WOMAN

I'm Suzanne Delmonico. Jesse's English teacher.

DEB

Oh. Right. Hi.

WOMAN

I just wanted to tell you what a lovely, thoughtful young man he is. You've done a wonderful job.

DEB

Thank you.

Woman goes, but her words stay with Deb long after she's left.

JESSE AND HIS FRIENDS

A SLOW SONG comes on. Couples move onto the dance floor to slow dance. A cute girl, MEGAN, 13, approaches Jesse.

MEGAN

Do you wanna dance with me, Jesse?

JESSE

I don't really dance...

But a FRIEND pushes Jesse toward Megan. The two make their way onto the dance floor. She places her hands on his shoulders. His hands settle on her hips.

MEGAN

(re: Deb)

Is that your grandmother?

JESSE

Mmm hmm.

MEGAN

Do you live with her?

JESSE

Yeah.

MEGAN

What happened to your mom and dad?

JESSE

No one really knows what happened to my mom. She disappeared when I was like a year old. And my dad he died two years ago.

MEGAN

How?

JESSE

Drugs, I think.

MEGAN

...I'm sorry.

JESSE

That's okay. I only met him like twice.

MEGAN

I'm glad you came tonight. I was hoping you were gonna be here.

Jesse looks over at his friends. They're all mouthing '*kiss her, kiss her*'. That's too bold. But he does hold her a little tighter. And he even smiles a little.

INT. SUN VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL -- CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Deb wanders down the corridor and pauses at a wall featuring the class photos of each graduating class from the high school. She finds the '**Class of 1989**' and scans the students' faces until she arrives at her own.

CLOSE ON 18-YEAR-OLD DEB IN THE PHOTO

Smiling the broadest smile we've ever seen. The big-haired class clown. A rebel without a clue.

BACK ON OLDER DEB

Pondering the way her life has turned out against that young dreamer who has yet to feel the pain the world can inflict.

LAUGHTER from down the hall pulls Deb from her thoughts. Two kids emerge from a restroom and shuffle off down the hall.

Deb glances at her younger self one final time, then heads back toward the gymnasium.

INT. PEGGY'S CONDO -- HILLTOP ASSISTED LIVING -- NIGHT

Dark. The sound of the television. A KNOCK at the door.

DEB (O.C.)
Ma? Ma, it's Deb.

No response. The door opens. Deb enters with a dinner tray and finds Peggy slumped awkwardly on the couch. She PANICS, SHAKES her mother.

DEB (CONT'D)
Ma? Ma!?

Peggy stirs, opens her eyes momentarily, mutters something unintelligible and then falls back asleep.

Deb exhales. Breathes and takes a moment to let the fear drain out of her. The fear that her mother could slip away at any moment is constant.

She finds a blanket, drapes it over her mother, then reaches for the remote and turns back to the tv.

CNN plays. Coverage of Pope Francis greeting thousands in Saint Peter's Square. Kissing the sick and disfigured. Deb watches him for a few moments, moved by his compassion and mercy. Then --

SHAWNA (O.C.)
Deb? Deb, are you in here?

Deb turns to Shawna standing in the doorway. Seeing that Peggy's asleep, Shawna approaches and whispers to Deb.

SHAWNA (CONT'D)
There's a phone call for you.
Detective Morris. Says it's urgent.

INT. ASTON POLICE DEPARTMENT -- CONFERENCE ROOM -- NIGHT

Deb and Kath sit anxiously at a table. DETECTIVES MORRIS and O'BRIEN, 60 and 50 now, enter and sit across from them.

DETECTIVE MORRIS
Hey, Deb. Kath. Thanks for coming
in on such short notice.

DEB
What are we doing here?

DETECTIVE MORRIS
Have you been following the news
about the Amanda Butler case?
Missing girl from Eddystone.

DEB
A little. I've seen her parents.
Why?

DETECTIVE MORRIS
Two hikers found her body in Ridley
Creek State Park. DNA on the body
was matched to a sex offender named
Frank Derrick, a maintenance worker
and father living in Eddystone.

O'Neil slides a haunting mugshot across the desk. The killer,
FRANK DERRICK, 45, is a brawny, bearded roughneck.

DEB
What does this hafta do with
Bridget?

DETECTIVE O'BRIEN
Derrick was facing the death
penalty in the Butler case. In
exchange for a plea deal, he told
us there were other girls...and
that he could lead us to them.

Deb looks up from the picture...holding her breath...

DETECTIVE MORRIS
We found Bridget's remains, Deb.

Kath GASPS. Deb's silent. She's known all these years that
her daughter was dead, but hearing those words -- the
horrible finality of it all -- rocks her. Finally...

DEB
...where?

DETECTIVE MORRIS

A nature preserve in Coatesville.
We found her a few days ago.

KATH

A few days ago? And you didn't call
to tell us?

DETECTIVE MORRIS

I know. And I'm sorry, Kath. But we
were waiting for the medical
examiner to give us confirmation
based on the dental records you
provided all those years ago. Given
all you've been through we wanted
to be certain it was her.

KATH

You said other girls...

DETECTIVE O'BRIEN

There were two other bodies besides
Bridget's. Two other teenage girls.

Morris slides two photos over to Deb. Pretty teenage girls.

DETECTIVE MORRIS

(re: the teenage girls)

Jessica Edmonds and Kelly Ryerson.
Jessica disappeared in 2005, Kelly
in 2008.

DEB

And you're sure it's him? I mean --

DETECTIVE MORRIS

It's him. He led us to the bodies.
And Derrick owned this car in 2003.

Morris slips out another photo: a grey '98 Buick LeSabre.

DETECTIVE MORRIS (CONT'D)

It matches the witness descriptions
we first received. We're in the
process of tracking the car down to
see if there's any of Bridget's DNA
left inside.

A very long beat. Deb stares at the car...the teenage girls..
then at Derrick...

DEB

How did my daughter die?

DETECTIVE MORRIS
We don't know.

DEB
Did she suffer?

DETECTIVE MORRIS
We don't know. I know this isn't what you wanna hear, Deb, but the truth is after eleven years we might never know those details.

Deb isn't satisfied with that answer.

KATH
So what happens now?

DETECTIVE MORRIS
A sentencing hearing date will be set. And this monster will spend the rest of his life in a cage where he belongs.

EXT. DEB'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Kath's minivan rolls into the drive. Deb and Kath climb out. Chris' Camaro is parked in the street. Chris steps out of the car. Deb notices him and hurries to the front door.

CHRIS
Terry told me there was news about Bridget.

DEB
Leave me alone.

CHRIS
Deb, please just talk to me.

KATH
Now's not the time, Chris.

Deb slips inside the home.

CHRIS
Kath, tell me what's going on.

KATH
Just get the fuck outta here. Okay?

Kath SLAMS the door on Chris. Locks it. He sighs, then retreats back to his car.

EXT. DEB'S HOUSE -- LATER THAT NIGHT

A bevy of LOCAL NEWS CREWS are stationed out front.

INT. DEB'S HOUSE -- FAMILY ROOM -- NIGHT

Deb, Jesse, Kath and Terry sit on the couch watching coverage of the arrest and murders. WE SEE --

-- A shackled FRANK DERRICK led into county jail.

-- PHOTOS OF THE VICTIMS: Amanda, Jessica, Kelly and Bridget.

-- Frank Derrick's WIFE and TWO DAUGHTERS chased by camera crews inside their small home as ANGRY NEIGHBORS toss eggs at them. One of the daughter's shouts at the cameras, *We didn't know anything! None of us knew anything!*

-- MURDERER has been spray painted on the family's garage.

Jesse looks overwhelmed. Deb pulls him close.

INT. DEB'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Deb's asleep. She stirs at the sound of something. It's SINGING coming from the hallway. She peels the covers back and steps into the --

HALLWAY

where she sees Bridget rocking an infant Jesse in her arms. She's HUMMING a lullaby. Bridget wanders into her bedroom.

Deb follows, enters the bedroom. It's dark inside. A black void. She switches on the light and sees --

FRANK DERRICK sitting on the bed. His face as white as chalk. A look of awful shame on his face as if he's done something unspeakable. He looks up at Deb with bloodshot eyes and --

INT. DEB'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

-- DEB SHOOTS UP FROM HER NIGHTMARE, looks around. Rushes into the hall. No one's there. A light glows under Jesse's bedroom door. She continues that way and opens the door.

Jesse's sitting up in bed watching a sitcom. Unable to fall asleep as well.

INT. DEB'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

The digital clock reads **5:12 AM**. Deb's wide awake, thinking.
Jesse's asleep in the easy chair in the corner.

EXT. DEB'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Deb exits the home and is swarmed by REPORTERS who bark questions and shove their microphones in her face. She pushes her way to her Ford and climbs inside.

INT. ASTON POLICE DEPARTMENT -- MORNING

Deb sits anxiously in the waiting room. DETECTIVE MORRIS enters with a bagged lunch in hand. He doesn't notice Deb sitting there.

DEB

John.

DETECTIVE MORRIS

(turns)

Oh. Hey, Deb.

DEB

I need to talk to him.

DETECTIVE MORRIS

Excuse me...?

DEB

Derrick. I need to know what happened to my daughter. I need to know everything.

Detective Morris considers Deb a long moment and seems to understand her need for closure. Finally --

DETECTIVE MORRIS

Let me call the public defender's office. See what I can do.

INT. ASTON POLICE DEPARTMENT -- WAITING ROOM -- LATER

Detective Morris approaches Deb, sits down beside her.

DETECTIVE MORRIS

Derrick's given a half-hour visitation time every day which he uses for his family.

(MORE)

DETECTIVE MORRIS (CONT'D)

The only way you can see him is if you get them to give up their visit.

DEB

How am I gonna do that?

DETECTIVE MORRIS

You didn't hear it from me, but they visit every morning from 10 to 10:30. I'll push on my end, but seeing your face might help.

EXT. COUNTY JAIL -- MORNING

Deb waits outside the county jail. Frank Derrick's FAMILY -- a WIFE, 50, TWO DAUGHTERS, 20s -- approach. They're simple, working class folks ruined by their father's secrets. Deb accosts them, targeting Derrick's WIFE specifically --

DEB

My name's Deb Connor. Your husband murdered my daughter. I wanna ask him why.

DAUGHTER 1

(shielding her fragile,
shaken mother)

Please back away.

DEB

Don't fuckin' touch me. I wanna talk to your husband.

The family slips inside the jail.

THE NEXT MORNING, SAME TIME

Derrick's family approaches the jail once again. Deb steps in front of them and attempts to block their path.

DEB

I just wanna know why he killed my daughter, that's all.

DAUGHTER 1

We're very sorry.

DEB

I'm not mad at you. I just wanna know how he got her in the car.

(MORE)

DEB (CONT'D)
I wanna know what happened once he
got her in the car --

They skirt around Deb and enter the jail.

THE NEXT MORNING, SAME TIME

Deb catches the family as they're leaving the jail this time
and follows them toward their car --

DAUGHTER 1
We're sorry, ok? Will you please
just leave us alone?

DEB
If you're sorry get your father to
talk to me.

They slip inside a rundown Dodge Stratus. Derrick's WIFE
climbs into the backseat. Deb prevents Daughter from shutting
the door. Wife looks up at Deb. It's the first time the two
have made eye contact.

WIFE
I'm so sorry.

DEB
Get your husband to speak to me.
Please. I'm begging you...

Wife seems to be making a decision when -- BOOM -- Daughter
shuts the door. Deb can only watch helplessly as the car
drives off.

INT. DEB'S BEDROOM -- FOLLOWING MORNING

Deb's asleep. The portable phone on the night stand RINGS.
Deb stirs, slides on her glasses, answers --

DEB
Hello?... Oh. Hi...
(surprised, sits up)
What time?

INT. KATH'S MINIVAN, MOVING -- MORNING

Driving to the county jail. Terry drives, Kath sits in the
passenger seat. Peggy and Deb occupy the middle seats. Deb
stares outside, using all her focus to quell the emotions
raging within her.

KATH

Deb, if you don't wanna do this. We can turn around.

Deb's concentrating too hard to respond. Peggy reaches over and holds her daughter's hand. Deb squeezes it for strength.

INT. COUNTY JAIL -- MORNING -- VARIOUS SHOTS AS

Deb is processed by SECURITY. She hands over her Driver's License, cell phone, keys, etc... Fills out a form. Her belongings are searched. She passes through a full-body scanner. An electromagnetic wand is waved over her body.

INT. COUNTY JAIL -- VISITOR CENTER -- MORNING

A room crowded with inmates' families. Small children play with donated toys. Deb looks around at the sullen faces of the mothers and parents and children whose lives have been broken and stalled.

A GUARD enters the room --

GUARD

Deborah Connor.

Deb hears her name, but doesn't move right away.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Deborah Connor?

DEB

Uh yes. Right here.

Deb stands and follows Guard out.

INT. PHONE ROOM -- COUNTY JAIL -- MORNING

Deb sits in a stall, staring at the glass partition which, in a few moments, will be the only thing separating her from the man who murdered her daughter all those years ago. CLINK -- the door opens and startles Deb slightly. She swallows her fear, determined not to show this man any emotion.

FRANK DERRICK is led in and set down across from her. He doesn't look like the monster we saw in the mug shot. His hair's been cut, his beard shaved off. If we didn't know the horrible truth about him he could pass for the local mailman. Strangely he seems far more nervous than Deb.

Deb lifts her phone. After a moment, Derrick does the same.

Neither speaks for a few moments.

Just static on the line.

Deb stares at him. Brave, infrangible.

Derrick looks away.

FRANK DERRICK

I'm sorry, I can't even...look at you...

DEB

We don't have to look at each other. I just want you to answer my questions. You owe me that much.

FRANK DERRICK

...okay.

DEB

Why Bridget?

FRANK DERRICK

There was no reason, I mean... I got into a fight with my girlfriend that night and... I smoked some pot and drank some vodka and was just cruisin' around trying to blow off steam when I saw her walkin' down Ridge Road.

DEB

How'd you get her into your car?

FRANK DERRICK

I pulled up beside her and asked where she was goin' and if she wanted a ride. She said no. I could tell she wasn't gonna come with me... I kept a gun in the glove compartment, so I pulled it out and told her to get in the car or else I'd shoot her.

DEB

Then what happened?

FRANK DERRICK

She got in the car. We drove around for awhile just listenin' to the radio. I didn't have nothin' planned or no place to go so...

(MORE)

FRANK DERRICK (CONT'D)

I asked her her name and some things about her life and... She told me she was leavin' a party to go home. That she had a baby... I remember her sayin' he had a toothache, or he was cuttin' a tooth and she had to get home to see him.

DEB

Then what happened?

FRANK DERRICK

While we were drivin' I remembered this place -- this nature preserve-- where I'd done some work before. So I drove there and parked and drank some more vodka...

Derrick hesitates. He still hasn't looked back at Deb since he first turned away.

DEB

Then what happened?

FRANK DERRICK

Then I...I took the gun and I told her to take off all her clothes and get in the backseat.

(he cracks a little,
starts to cry)

And once she got off all'a her clothes I got in the backseat with her. She hit me, I remember. Tried to get outta the car... But I pulled her back and struck her a few times... And then I raped her. God forgive me.

Deb blinks. A single tears rolls down her face. She wipes it away before he has a chance to see it.

DEB

Then what happened?

FRANK DERRICK

She was cryin' a lot. She kept sayin' she wanted her mom. That she just wanted to go home and see her baby and... When I was done, I knew...that I'd crossed a line. That I couldn't just let her go. So I...I was strangling her right there in the car.

(MORE)

FRANK DERRICK (CONT'D)

(starts to sob)

I'm sorry. I didn't plan on doin'
it. It shouldn't have happened. But
I...I let this other part'a me take
over. I'm sorry...

His voice, his sobs, his excuses -- it all starts to sound like fingernails on a chalkboard to Deb. After a few moments she can't listen to it anymore.

She hangs up the phone.

Derrick's still talking, but all Deb hears is silence.

Real silence. As if all the sound has been removed from the world.

She watches Derrick sob like a child.

Not for Bridget. For himself.

Deb feels nothing.

Absolutely fucking nothing.

Finally, she stands and walks out of the room.

EXT. COUNTY JAIL -- MORNING

Deb exits the building and walks towards Kath's minivan. Kath notices her approaching and steps out to meet her.

KATH

Are you alright?

Deb collapses into Kath's arms. Her leg give out. She summoned so much of her energy preparing for that meeting and now there's nothing left. Kath struggles to hold her up.

KATH (CONT'D)

Terry! Terry, help me!

Terry rushes out of the minivan and helps Kath carry Deb into the car.

INT. KATH'S MINIVAN, MOVING -- AFTERNOON

Kath holds Deb on her lap. Deb's sobbing like a child. All the emotion she tried to contain pours out of her like a damn wall collapsing. Gushing, unyielding.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DEB'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- SOME MORNINGS LATER

Deb sits at the kitchen table with a cup of coffee. On the table we see a FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH OF BRIDGET AND JESSE when Jesse was just an infant. She's reading over a piece of paper labeled: **Victim Impact Statement**.

Jesse comes down the stairs in a suit. Deb turns back.

DEB

Come here.

Jesse nears. Deb fixes his tie, picks lint off his jacket.

INT. DEB'S FORD TAURUS, MOVING -- MORNING

Deb drives, glances at Jesse in the passenger seat. He has his head down and he looks scared. After all, he's about to come face-to-face with the man who killed his mother.

Deb reaches over and holds his hand.

EXT. DELAWARE COUNTY COURTHOUSE -- MORNING

Sentencing day. A large crowd has gathered on the steps. PRESS, VICTIMS' FAMILY MEMBERS, LEGAL TEAMS, et al. Deb and Jesse arrive and hug Kath and Terry and Peggy who have come for support as well.

KATH

Ready for this?

DEB

Ready as I'm ever gonna be.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.C.)

Deb!

Deb turns. On the courthouse steps is SARAH BUTLER, the mother we saw on television earlier. She's standing beside two other women and waves Deb up to join them.

DEB

(to Kath)

Hold these for me, willya.

Deb hands Kath the picture frame and her victim statement. She walks up the steps to Sarah. Sarah embraces her warmly.

SARAH

Here. I want you to meet the others.

Sarah pulls Deb toward the other two WOMEN, the mothers of Derrick's other victims.

SARAH (CONT'D)

This is Denise Stockton, Jessica's mother. And this is Erin Carter, Kelly's mother.

No hi or hello. Only hugs. And tears. Lots of tears for these women forever joined in this terrible bond. REPORTERS swarm, snap photos. Finally, the women break the embrace.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Should we hold hands?

DEB

I think that's a good idea.

The four mothers link hands.

Together, side-by-side, they courageously walk into the courthouse as we --

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NATURE PRESERVE -- FALL MORNING -- SOME DAYS LATER

From a great distance we see a small group walking toward the edge of the vast woods.

EXT. FOREST -- MORNING

Detectives Morris and O'Brien lead Deb, Kath, Terry and Jesse through the forest. They each carry a few items -- flowers, photographs, a teddy bear -- to memorialize the spot. Finally they arrive at a tree which has been marked with a ribbon.

DETECTIVE MORRIS

This is where we found her. Right here.

Deb looks around. Trees in all directions, as far as the eye can see. Birds CHIRP. Leaves SHIVER. It's peaceful here and that brings her a modicum of relief.

She kneels down and touches the dirt where her daughter was buried. There are tears in her eyes. Her hands move across the earth. Gently, slowly. Like a mother reaching down into a child's crib and soothing it back to sleep.

Then Jesse, normally so shy, does something unexpected. He kneels down beside Deb and puts his arm around her.

Deb looks over at him.

He's crying, too.

She pulls him close. Hugs him so tight.

DEB

She loved you. You have no idea how
much she loved you.

FADE OUT.

EXT. WILLOWMAY FARM -- FALL -- SOME WEEKS LATER

As is tradition, the family has come to celebrate Bridget's birthday. FAMILY, FRIENDS (including PAUL and CINDY) and many of Deb's CO-WORKERS from Hilltop mingle. Shawna pushes Peggy around in a wheelchair.

Down by the paddock, Jesse stands beside Chris.

CHRIS

How's the team doin'?

JESSE

Pretty good. We lost to East, but
beat Henderson last week.

CHRIS

Stats?

JESSE

Four catches and a touchdown.

Chris rubs his head: *attaboy*. Jesse has something he wants to say, but he hesitates, not one to brag. Finally --

JESSE (CONT'D)

I got a girlfriend now.

CHRIS

Yeah?

Jesse takes out his iPhone and proudly shows Chris a 'selfie' of him and Megan, the girl he danced with in the gymnasium.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Pretty. Was it the grinding moves I
taught you that won her over?

Jesse laughs. Chris tousles his hair and pulls him close. They miss one another. Deeply.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
How's your Gran holdin' up?

JESSE
Okay. She misses you.

CHRIS
Yeah?

JESSE
She won't say it but I can tell.

CHRIS
I'm gonna make things right.
Just might take a little while. Be
strong for her while I'm not
around, alright?

Jesse nods. Chris glances to his right and sees Deb
approaching with her hands in her jean pockets.

DEB
Hey.

CHRIS
Hey.

DEB
(to Jesse)
Why don't you go play with your
cousins, okay?

Jesse understands, walks off.

An awkward moment between Deb and Chris. Finally --

CHRIS
How ya holdin' up?

DEB
I'm here.

CHRIS
You look good.

DEB
What do you want? You wanna say
you're sorry? That you screwed up?
That whatever the hell you had with
her didn't mean anything?

CHRIS
It didn't.

DEB
Even if I believed all that it
doesn't change anything.

A beat.

CHRIS
Do you still love me, Deb? Cause I
still love you.
(Deb hesitates to answer)
You say 'no' and I'll get in my car
and leave you alone.

DEB
Of course I still love you. But I'm
too old to put up with your shit.
Or anybody else's shit.

KATH (O.C.)
Come on, Deb. Time to sing.

DEB
(calls back to Kath)
I'll be right up.

She looks at Chris, shrugs: *now what?*

CHRIS
You didn't say no. So I'm gonna
keep comin' around and comin'
around 'til I win you back.

DEB
Well you're a free man. You can do
whatever the hell you want.

CHRIS
I know what I want.

Deb stares at him one final moment, then walks off. Chris
watches her go.

AT THE PICNIC TABLE

Kath removes the birthday cake from a box and sets it on the
table. Deb arrives.

KATH
How'd that go?

DEB
It went. How'd he know we were
here?

KATH

What're you talking about? He comes every year.

DEB

On Bridget's birthday. We moved it back cause a the storm.

Deb looks at Kath. Kath turns away, guilty.

DEB (CONT'D)

Traitor.

KATH

I know you don't wanna hear this, but he really loves you.

DEB

If he really loved me he woulda kept his tiny dick in his Levi's.

Kath smiles, passes the birthday candles over to Deb who begins setting them on the cake.

MUSIC UP: *William Tyler 'The World Set Free'* PLAYS OVER --

A SERIES OF SHOTS NOW AT THE FARM --

-- Everyone gathers around a large picnic table. Deb and Kath light the birthday candles. So many they hardly fit.

DEB

You're gettin' to be an old woman, Bridg. We're gonna have to start gettin' you a bigger cake, I think.

LAUGHS. The final candle is lit and everyone begins singing '*Happy Birthday*' to Bridget.

-- Jesse takes a few deep breaths and blows out all 27 candles for the mother he will never know.

-- Kath and Peg pass out slices of cake to everyone.

-- A hundred red balloons are released into the sky.

-- DUSK NOW and all the kids are playing in a field while the adults look on from a distance.

-- TIGHT ON DEB, watching Chris play a game of football with the young boys. Maybe it's how handsome he looks in the late-day light. Or maybe it's that, in her age, she knows that romance novel ending doesn't exist. Never did.

Either way, she looks at him with great feeling, knowing she loves him too deeply to shield him out forever. That her life is better, fuller, happier with him in it.

-- LATER AND DARK NOW. The HILLTOP EMPLOYEES load into the Hilltop shuttle to be driven home. Shawna aids Peggy on. Peggy waves goodbye from inside and blows Deb a kiss. Deb blows a kiss back and watches the shuttle drive off.

-- EVEN LATER NOW and Deb stands alone at the paddock fence. Everyone else has left and she watches the stable hands lead the horses up toward the stable for the night. She seems peaceful, a woman comfortable in her own skin.

When the last horse is led out of the paddock, Deb follows it up to the stable. She enters as the last of the stable hands exits. For a moment she thinks she's alone in the long, cavernous space until she notices a YOUNG GIRL at the opposite end of the room gently grooming a mare's head with a curry comb. The girl has her back to us.

Deb approaches.

The girl turns around.

IT'S BRIDGET. Exactly as we remember her. Still 16 years old.

Bridget smiles gently at her mother.

Deb wraps her arms around her daughter and whispers to her.

DEB (CONT'D)

I'm here. I'm always here, sweetie.

Comforted, loved, Bridget returns to grooming the mare.

And they stay that way for a very long while.

INT. KATH'S MINIVAN, DRIVING -- NIGHT

Deb's asleep with her head pressed against the window. She wakes from her dream of Bridget, sits up, squints. Her glasses are lopsided on her face. She removes them and places them inside the purse at her feet.

Stretches now, looks around the car. Kath drives. Terry's asleep in the passenger seat and Jesse's lying down in the back row playing a game on his iPad.

Kath glances at the rearview mirror and sees Deb awake.

KATH

You okay?

Deb nods, then leans forward and wraps her arms around the driver's seat.

Around her sister.

In the exact same way she did to Bridget in her dream.

Kath reaches up and touches Deb's arm, knowing exactly what this gesture means.

Thank you for loving me.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

It has meant everything.

As the music continues, we stay on the sisters for a very long time and then slowly --

FADE OUT.

T H E E N D .