

THE BARKING SPIDER

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL TRACK - DAY

LANA, 18, in running sweats, stretches. Having arrived early, she is one of the few track and field STUDENTS present.

SEAN, 19, also in sweats, and holding a folded newspaper, runs up to her and--

LANA

Hi, Sean. What are you up to?

SEAN

I got my second assignment with the Gazette. It's this track meet.

LANA

Why are you wearing sweats then? You're not running.

SEAN

I figured the coach would kick me off the field if he knew why I'm here. You know how he is.

LANA

I do. He's a bit anal on staying focused. Still, it's a couple of hours before I run. Why so early?

He spreads out the folded newspaper. It reads: LOCAL GIRL RUNS AGAINST GOODMAN IN STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS. He folds it back and slides it in the hip section of his trousers.

LANA

Did they have to write about my mother in that article?

SEAN

I know. Sorry about that. But when my editor found out I knew you personally ... I mean, everyone's talking about Goodman and wondering if she'll be the first High School State Champion 3 years in a row.

LANA

Probably will.

SEAN

I don't know about that, Lana.
Everyone knows you took a misstep
last year. A lot of shoving around
the turn. Cost you the race, maybe.

Lana goes to say something, but holds back.

SEAN

I told him I think you can stop
her. So, he wants me to get your
story. Especially in light of all
the difficulties in your life.

LANA

I don't think so, Sean. Go cover
Goodman. She's over there.

She head nods towards the bleachers.

BLEACHERS

GOODMAN (18), sits at the bottom seat and puts on her stretch
pants. An imposing figure at 6'2", she snarls at a student
runner who walks by.

Another student passes by and Goodman gives that runner a
stare that could flame a candle.

LANA (O.S.)

The laws of the jungle apply here.
You show weakness, you risk being
eaten. That's the way it is.

ON LANA AND SEAN

SEAN

I saw the race last year. I know
what happened. She ran a runner off
the track. That just wasn't right.

LANA

We were all bunched together.
Everyone was shoving everyone. The
judges ruled it an accident.

SEAN

You got a great story, Lana. Come
on. Talk to me.

LANA

No, Sean. My personal story is nobody else's business.

SEAN

I'll let you read it first. I will not print anything you don't want printed. I promise. Besides, if you beat Goodman today, you'll be a national hero.

LANA

Stop it. Nobody's has ever beaten Goodman.

SEAN

Exactly my point. Still, I think your story's good enough without beating Goodman. Come on. What do you say?

LANA

No, and that's final. Oh, crap, here comes Goodman.

As Goodman approaches--

GOODMAN

I read that Gazette article.
(to Sean)
You write that?

SEAN

No. But my editor wants me to write a story about the winner today.

GOODMAN

Well, that'll be me, then. Hey, I thought you're a Freshman at State.

SEAN

I freelance for the Gazette. They like my work. What can I tell you.

GOODMAN

(to Lana)
So, you're half black, huh? Doesn't your kind do better in sprints.

SEAN

Her kind?

GOODMAN

Yeah. Blacks do better in sprints,
don't they. Doesn't matter. Best
you can hope for today is second.

Goodman leaves. Sean quizzes Lana with a look.

LANA

Did Goodman already accept a
scholarship to State?

SEAN

Don't know. I think she did.

LANA

Alright. I will tell you my story.

Sean takes out his tape recorder and pad and pencil.

SEAN

Good.

LANA

But you must promise me you'll do
me a favor first.

SEAN

Sure. Anything. What?

LANA

Not now. After I tell you my story
I'll ask for the favor. I'm going
to stretch and walk. You do the
same. Keep up. Make it look like
you're warming up with me.

As Sean stretches, he turns on the recorder, and hides it in
his sweatshirt sleeve pocket. He's ready.

LANA

Some of what I tell you, the
beginning, especially, I'll piece
together from what Gramps and
Steven ... and my mother told me.

SEAN

Alright. Go.

LANA

It starts just before I was born.

FLASHBACK - BEGIN LANA'S STORY - 18 YEARS AGO

INT. JOE'S HOUSE IN SUBURBIA - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

JOE GREGORY, late 40s, lays on a couch watching TV. His loose-fitting clothes hide his slightly pudgy figure.

PRESENT-DAY LANA (V.O.)

By his own accounts, this was not the best time in Gramps' life. He was lethargic. A couch potato.

A photo of a smiling woman and an urn sit on the fireplace mantle. A picture of the Eiffel Tower hangs over the mantle.

PRESENT-DAY LANA (V.O.)

Nana died two years before I was born. Gramps took it hard.

Joe's eyes droop. His cell phone rings. Agitated, he awakes, takes a quick look at who's calling, then answers it.

JOE

Hello, Steven.

STEVEN (V.O.)

Hi, Dad. What are you doing?

JOE

Watching TV.

STEVEN (V.O.)

What do you do besides watch TV?

PRESENT-DAY LANA (V.O.)

Steven's my Uncle. A cool guy. He used to check up on Gramps a lot.

JOE

Not today, Steven.

STEVEN (V.O.)

You gotta do something.

JOE

I am doing something now. I just told you, I'm watching TV.

STEVEN (V.O.)

You need to do something with some passion behind it, Dad.

JOE

OK. Then I should've told you I'm passionately watching television.

Joe looks over to the mantle and sighs.

STEVEN (V.O.)

I know that sigh. You're looking at Mom's urn, again.

JOE

No ... yes.

STEVEN (V.O.)

Dad? Please stop beating yourself up.

JOE

I'm not. She had cancer. I had no control over that.

STEVEN (V.O.)

Don't be coy. You know what I'm talking about.

JOE

It's not just that. For the last ten years of her life I told her we couldn't go to Paris because we didn't have the money.

STEVEN (V.O.)

You told me it was because of all the kooks overseas who wanted to spit on Americans.

JOE

Yeah, that too, but with your mom I used money, or lack of it, as an excuse for not taking her anywhere. I should've been more gracious.

A hefty groan bellows from the telephone receiver.

STEVEN (V.O.)

So go to Paris, then.

JOE

I can't. I don't have the money.

STEVEN (V.O.)

Yes, you do. Don't be such a skinflint. You have holes in your shoes and won't buy a new pair until the cardboard inserts wear out. Go. You know you want to.

JOE

Your mother fell in love with Paris when she went there as a kid to visit her aunt. That's why she wanted me to dump your her ashes in the Seine. That's all she talked about before she died.

STEVEN (V.O.)

Ok. Fine. Get off the damn couch, then and go. Do something. You're becoming a curmudgeon.

JOE

I am not.

STEVEN (V.O.)

You're getting old and cranky.

JOE

I'm doing what I want to do.

STEVEN (V.O.)

Which is nothing.

JOE

TV is not nothing. It's mankind's crowning achievement.

STEVEN (V.O.)

You want me to come over?

JOE

No.

The doorbell rings.

JOE

Hold on. Someone is at the door.

FOYER

Joe opens the door to STEVEN, 30s, clean shaven, denim pants, sport shirt. He pockets his cell phone. Joe slams the door as he pockets his cell phone.

The door immediately opens and Steven walks in. Behind him is LIZ, 30s, braided hair, skirt and button-down shirt. She's holding a Tupperware container.

LIZ
It's meatloaf. I made it today.

STEVEN
It's toxic. You might die.

Liz hands it to Joe, then smacks Steven, kiddingly.

LIZ
There's enough for a couple of sandwiches. And stop by when you get a chance. Brad needs help with his math.
(to Steven)
I'll be in the car. Don't be long.

JOE
Thanks, Liz.

LIZ
You're welcome.

She gently touches Joe's hand.

LIZ
Don't be a stranger, Joe.

LIVING ROOM

Joe heads into the kitchen to put the meatloaf away while Steven sits on the couch. Joe comes in and sits next to him.

JOE
So, how is Brad doing?

STEVEN
Fine. We just got him a fishing rod. The reel sticks, so we're taking it back to get a new one.
(pauses)
(MORE)

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Brad's in the car. He doesn't want to come in because of what happened the last time he was here.

JOE

What happened the last time?

STEVEN

You called him stupid.

JOE

No, I didn't. I called him a retard, and he knew I was joking.

STEVEN

He wanted to come here because he knows you're depressed, but if you're going to treat him--

BRAD (7), crew-cut, the all-American look, appears and hesitantly walks into the living room.

JOE

Brad, how much is two plus one?

BRAD

Three.

JOE

How much is six times three?

BRAD

Hmm. Eighteen.

JOE

You're a genius.

Joe highbrows Steven, then pats the couch for Brad to sit.

JOE

Study your multiplication tables. That's the key to math, you know. Heard you got a new fishing rod.

BRAD

Yeah. You want to see it?

JOE

I know what they look like.

STEVEN

OK, son. Say goodbye to Gramps and go wait in the car.

BRAD

Bye, Gramps.

They hug, and Steven waits for Brad to leave, then --

STEVEN

I heard there's a new ballroom dance class at the studio in town.

Steven notices a bag of popcorn stuck between the cushions and pulls it out.

STEVEN

Could use the exercise. And maybe dancing will help change your disposition. And stop eating junk.

He holds up the bag of popcorn then tosses it on the cushion.

JOE

What brings you around, Steven?
You're not going to tell me I've lost more money, are you?

Over their half-muted conversation--

PRESENT-DAY LANA (V.O.)

Uncle Steven is an accountant. He managed Gramps' diminishing IRA. He heard Disney was interested in Pulsar, a company that does special effects in movies. He suggested Gramps invest a small amount when it went public. He felt guilty over losing most of Gramps portfolio in the housing crash at the time. He wanted to be cautious, but Gramps told him to invest his whole IRA in Pulsar. Reluctantly, my uncle did.

JOE

What did Pulsar close at yesterday?

STEVEN

Five dollars.

JOE

We bought it when it was six.

STEVEN

Have you seen Dixie lately?

Joe hesitates, falls silent. Finally--

JOE

I haven't seen her since I gave her
the money for ...

Brad charges in with his rod and brings it over to Joe. It's hard for Joe to summon any enthusiasm, but he tries.

JOE

Wow. A dozy.

Joe flicks it a couple of times, and the reel sticks.

BRAD

It sticks. That's why we're taking
it back.

Joe hands it back to Brad, who flicks it, but this time it doesn't stick. The sinker accidentally knocks over the urn. Joe runs over to the urn and carefully picks it up.

JOE

What are you, an idiot? What the
hell's the matter with you?

Joe bites his lip. He puts the urn back on the mantle.

BRAD

I'm sorry, Gramps.

Brad runs out of the house. Steven looks hard at Joe.

STEVEN

It was an accident, Dad!

Joe sighs, mumbles.

STEVEN

Why can't you be nice to him? It's
as if you don't like kids anymore.

JOE

He shouldn't take it personal. I
don't like anyone at the moment.

Steven gets up and as they walk to the door--

STEVEN

I saw Dixie's dope-head friends at the store. I overheard them talking about Dixie. She's still using.

JOE

Good to know. I'm assuming she got the abortion then.

STEVEN

One would hope she's not bringing a crack-kid into this world.

JOE

OK, enough. I don't want to talk about her.

STEVEN

Be nicer to Brad.

JOE

Tell Brad I'm sorry.

STEVEN

You tell him you're sorry. And do something else other than watching TV. You're isolating yourself.

INT. GROCERY STORE - NEXT DAY

Joe inspects cans of soup and puts a couple in his basket. He thinks a bit then puts one back.

He picks up another can from the shelf, looks at it, and puts that one back. He then heads down the aisle, stops, turns around, and comes back to the soup section.

ANOTHER AISLE

Joe inspects the ketchup shelf. He picks up a brand, then puts it back and moves on.

CHECKOUT LINE - LATER

Joe puts three cans of soup on the conveyer belt. As he waits, he recognizes the CHECKOUT WOMAN, 30s, pretty.

JOE

Oh, Hi ... um ... um.

CHECKOUT WOMAN

Gloria.

JOE

Yes. Hi, Gloria. Sorry.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Joe nods off while watching TV. An empty bowl of soup sits on the coffee table. The doorbell wakes him.

HALLWAY

Joe shuffles to the door and opens it. DIXIE, (30), wears an oversized dirty shirt that stretches because she is pregnant. A small suitcase leans against her leg.

PRESENT-DAY LANA (V.O.)

So, my sorry mother appeared out of nowhere with me in her belly. By her own admission she used drugs occasionally while I was her tenant for nine months.

JOE

Run out of friends to mooch off of?

DIXIE

No, Dad. I had an option to live on Al Pacino's yacht, but I figured you and I needed to spend quality time together. May I come in?

JOE

For how long?

She picks up her suitcase and walks in.

KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Joe prepares dinner while Dixie sits at the table fidgeting.

JOE

I see the money was well spent.

DIXIE

I had other pressing issues like eating and ...

JOE

Steven saw one of your druggie friends. Said you been using. Kid's gonna come out deformed. Should've taken you to the clinic myself.

DIXIE

I used the money to bail out her father from jail. Or at least I think it is her father. Not sure. You know how it is ...

JOE

No I don't. And you said ... HER father? What's that all about?

Dixie leans back and rubs her belly.

DIXIE

The muffin's a girl.

(pause)

Don't worry, Dad. If he's the father, he's back in jail, so...

JOE

If he's the father? That's supposed to make me feel better?

DIXIE

I got no control over how you feel.

Joe brings over a plate of hamburgers and sits.

JOE

Spoken like a true addict. So, you're basically telling me she has no father, and you have no job.

DIXIE

If you're gonna be putting me down, I might as well live in the streets. At least there I fit in.

She starts eating. After a pause--

JOE

What happened? You get fired from
your pole dancing gig?

DIXIE

I was a waitress, Dad. And I quit.
I got another job. I'm on temporary
leave until Lana is born.

She grunts in pain, then takes a pack of cigarettes from her
purse. Joe grabs them; throws them against the wall. SPLAT!

JOE

You're pregnant, and you don't
smoke here or anywhere on my
property. Understood?

DIXIE

My God! This is total bull-shit.
Color me gone. I'm outta here.

Dixie gets up and waddles out of the kitchen.

HALLWAY

She grabs the suitcase and leaves the house. After a few
seconds, three large bangs resonate off the door. Joe opens
it and finds Dixie in pain with a puddle by her feet.

DIXIE

My water broke.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Joe peers through the viewing window looking at the babies. A
younger MAN, 30s, stands next to him gawking as well.

MAN

Quite a bunch, huh?

JOE

They all look like aliens to me.

Joe stares at the baby who has the name GREGORY on her wrist.
He starts to leave, then looks back and watches the baby
knock off her knitted cap exposing her curly hair. The nurse
comes and picks up the Gregory girl and leaves.

INT. DIXIE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joe enters just as the nurse hands Lana to her. Joe stares at the baby and waits for the nurse to leave.

DIXIE
She's beautiful.

JOE
Is she black?

DIXIE
(looking closely)
Yeah. I think she is. Well, at least I know who the father is now.

JOE
Really? What the hell's the matter with you?

Joe leaves - angry. While Dixie rocks baby-Lana--

PRESENT-DAY LANA (V.O.)
I looked more black when I was born. Probably because of my hair. My complexion was always white.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY - A FEW WEEKS LATER

Joe sips his coffee while reading the newspaper at the table. He ignores a baby's distant cry.

The microwave DINGS and Dixie enters shortly afterwards. She retrieves the baby's bottle from the microwave, tests its temperature and starts to leave. She sees empty booze bottles in the garbage and points to it.

DIXIE
What did you do? What's this?

JOE
You want to do this now, or later.

DIXIE
What are you talking about?

JOE
We need to get some ground rules straight. First, no smoking on my property.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

It's bad enough you got what's-her-name addicted to cigarettes.

DIXIE

Her name is Lana.

JOE

Second, the minute I catch you drinking or doing drugs, you're outta here. Baby and all.

DIXIE

I don't believe you. I have to go to work. The baby-sitter will be here shortly.

JOE

And third, you're going to AA, like it or not.

Dixie runs upstairs with the bottle as the doorbell rings.

DIXIE (O.S.)

Please get the door. It's probably Francine.

Reluctantly, Joe gets up, groaning.

HALLWAY

Joe opens the door to a MAN (30s) with stringy hair and dirty jeans. Joe slams the door as Dixie trots down the stairs.

DIXIE

That's Hank. He happens to work at the diner. He's my ride to work.

Dixie re-opens the door to FRANCINE, the baby sitter, late-teens. The man with dirty jeans is walking back to his car.

Francine enters and as Dixie leaves--

DIXIE

Want my life, Francine? The baby bottle's is upstairs in her room. She hasn't been changed yet.

INT. DINER - LATE AFTERNOON

Dixie waits on a customer while the manager watches her from the register. His phone rings and he answers it.

ON DIXIE

She finishes taking the order and heads for the kitchen.

MANAGER

Dixie. Wait. Shirley can't make it in. I need you to do a double.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Francine, flounces in from the kitchen.

FRANCINE

Mr. Gregory. Dixie will be home in a few minutes. She said you would take over when I have to leave.

JOE

That's just ducky. Your money's on the table.

FRANCINE

I got it, thank you.

Francine leaves. The phone rings. Joe answers it and just listens. After a beat--

JOE

I got her for eight hours? You gotta be kidding me.

He hangs up and goes upstairs to a crying Lana.

LANA'S BEDROOM

Joe picks up Lana and holds her up and out by her armpits like she's radioactive. He awkwardly changes her diaper on the changing table. He's repulsed at what he sees and smells.

MONTAGE -- LANA CAPTURES JOE'S HEART; DIXIE DISTANCES HERSELF

-- Lana's birthday party: on the table - a cake with a 'number 1' candle buried in the middle.

At the table: Steven, Liz, Brad, Dixie, and Lana gorge themselves on cake. Joe takes a seat and watches.

-- A honk outside has Joe looking out the living room window. Dixie appears dressed in a tight skirt and sweater. They have a muted argument about her attire. It's brief because Joe sees Lana at the top of the steps by the child-gate.

-- Another birthday party with Steven's family present. Liz gets up with her camera, and takes a picture. She motions for Joe to take pictures. He reluctantly accepts. He notices Lana's messy face and chuckles. He snaps a picture.

-- In the living room Joe, sleepy, watches Lana dance to the Sesame Street music.

LANA

Spin. Spin.

JOE

Come on, kid. Slow down or I'll
crush a Valium in your sippy-cup.

-- While changing Lana's diaper, Joe gets poop on his hands. He touches his face, transferring the poop to his forehead and cheeks. He wipes his hands on his shirt and manages to change the diaper but looks like he's been through a war.

-- Lana jumps on Joe's stomach and chest while Sid-the-Science-Kid plays on TV in the background.

-- Lana sits on Joe's chest on the couch as she watches Sesame Street on TV. He uses the remote to change to Barney reciting "I love you, you love me." He hits the remote again to "Twinkle-Think" ... "Twinkle-Think." One more time to The Cat-In-The-Hat where the cat character summons "Thing-One" and "Thing Two". He settles in with that show.

-- Joe's changing Lana's diaper - he's somewhat of a pro now.

END MONTAGE

INT. JOE'S HOUSE AT THE STAIRWELL - DAY

Joe finishes putting up a banister underneath the regular banister at a height Lana can grab. Lana appears at the top of the stairs.

JOE

You're a young lady now, Lana. You should have your own banister.

Joe leads her to the lower banister and guides her down the stairs using the lower one.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Lana plays with coins on the table. Joe takes the coins from her, but he missed one. Lana picks it up, puts it in her mouth, and chokes. Joe jumps to his feet and grabs her. She stops breathing, passes out, and goes limp. Lifeless. Scary.

Joe performs the Heimlich Maneuver. Nothing. He tips her upside-down and slams her back. The coin flies to the floor allowing Lana to breath again. As she hysterically cries, Joe can't stop hugging her. He rocks her until she stops crying.

He looks up at the photo of his wife on the mantle. He looks at Lana, then back at the picture. He tears up.

INT. JOE'S LIVING ROOM/FOYER - NIGHT

Joe opens the front door and walks in the house. Loud music is playing upstairs in Dixie's room. Dixie and someone else are yelling at each other. He can hear Lana crying.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

I don't believe this. I get a call out of the blue and you tell me I'm a father to a four-year-old daughter. You sonna-of-a-witch.

DIXIE (O.S.)

Don't you use foul language in front of Lana. Look, you're making her cry. I shouldn't've told you.

INT. DIXIE'S BEDROOM/HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Joe comes in and sees BILL, a black man in jeans and a T-shirt, who is sitting on the floor looking at pictures with Dixie. Lana sits next to them and whines for attention.

Bill jumps up as Joe leans over to turn the music off.

JOE

Who's car is that out front?

BILL

That's mine. Who are you?

DIXIE

Dad, this is Bill. Lana's father.

JOE

Really. What kind of father are you. Four freakin' years and you show up now?

As the action shows Joe and Bill having an argument (MUTED) while Lana cries again. Bill leaves in a huff.

PRESENT-DAY LANA (V.O.)

That was the only time my father came to see me. I didn't know it for a long time, but he was in the Army and re-enlisted. I suppose he used the Army as excuse to never show up. I guess, Gramps scared him off. That's the only thing I remember at four.

INT. JOE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

While Joe reads an AA book, the doorbell rings. He gets up with the book and answers it.

Behind the door is BOB, clean-cut, 30s. Joe goes to the head of the stairs and yells--

JOE

Dixie--
(softer, to Bob)
What's your name?

BOB

Bob.

JOE

(yelling)
Bob, is here.

DIXIE (O.S.)

Tell him I'll be right there.

Joe sizes Bob up.

JOE
So, you're in AA.

BOB
Yeah. So much for anonymity.

JOE
You working on the twelve steps?

BOB
Yeah. I'm on step four.

Joe opens the book and reads step four.

JOE
Taking a moral inventory? How's
that working out for you?

Dixie trots down the stairs. As she grabs Bob and exits--

DIXIE
Do you mind, Dad? Sorry, Bob.

EXT. JOE'S PORCH - CONTINUOUS

The house door is ajar and Joe can hear them as they walk down the steps.

DIXIE
Did you get the weed?

BOB
Fifty bucks worth. You didn't tell
me your dad is an interrogator.

DIXIE
He's a jerk. Don't pay any
attention to him.

EXT. JOE'S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

A smoked-filled car pulls up with Dixie and Bob. She opens the door and smoke pours out.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joe peeks out the window and sees Dixie waving her hand vigorously in the air trying to disperse the smoke.

A radio plays music in the background. Joe turns around responding to a noise he hears behind him. It's Lana.

LANA

Catch me.

She starts running around the coffee table. Joe chases her for a few revolutions and she laughs hysterically. Another song plays - Lana stops and grabs Joe's hand and they dance. He bends down to lift her up and he farts. She laughs.

JOE

What was that?

He looks around as if someone else farted.

JOE

That was the barking spider.

He makes a 'raspberry' SOUND with his lips.

LANA

Barking spider. Get him.

XxLana screams to her delight while they both look everywhere for the phantom spider. Dixie opens the front door, unnoticed. After a few beats the action stops.

PRESENT-DAY LANA (V.O.)

Gramps introduced me to the barking spider when I was real young. I remember my mother wasn't very thrilled about it.

DIXIE

What's she doing up?

LANA

Mommie ... Mommie.

Lana sticks out her tongue and blows hard, giving a pretty good 'raspberry' SOUND.

LANA

Barking spider. Gramps farted.

JOE

Hey. You just threw me under bus.

DIXIE

What are you teaching my daughter?

Lana gives another raspberry sound with her tongue.

DIXIE

Go to bed, now. And stop spitting.

JOE

She's not spitting. She's making a fart noise. There's a difference.

Dixie yanks her by the arm and Lana yelps.

DIXIE

(To Joe)

How come you never taught me about the 'Barking Spider'? How come I never saw that loving look of a father on your face, like you have with my daughter?

Joe goes to speak, but the lump in his throat is obviously too big. Frustrated, Dixie turns and marches upstairs with Lana in tow. Between Lana's sobs,

LANA (O.S.)

Gramps ... Gramps help me.

Joe stoically retreats to his recliner. Buries his head in his hands.

INT. LANA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dixie puts Lana down in her bed. She won't stop crying.

DIXIE

Stop crying, you brat.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dixie enters and fetches the Febreze bottle. Sprays herself to clear the 'pot smell' from her clothes.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dixie storms down the steps and heads right for Joe.

DIXIE

You're teaching my daughter how to fart. What the--

JOE

Watch your tongue, Missy. And if you don't start paying more attention to your daughter--

DIXIE

What? You gonna take her from me?

JOE

I'm thinking on doing just that.

DIXIE

Over my dead body.

JOE

What's that smell?

DIXIE

It's my deodorant. And since when do you care? You haven't cared about me in years.

JOE

You make it very hard to care.

DIXIE

Really? And you made it easy for me, you cheapskate. You never loved me or bought me a bike. I had to learn to ride a bicycle from our next door neighbor.

JOE

You never appreciated anything. I worked hard--

DIXIE

Don't give me that crap. You never acknowledged the good things I did.

JOE

Like what, doing the dishes ...

(sniffs)

What's that smell?

Dixie bolts out of the room and stomps up the stairs, and Joe crumbles into a chair.

INT. JOE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

A woman's JEWELRY BOX sits on top of the dresser. When Joe comes out of the bathroom, he steps on something. He picks it up and sees it's an earring and immediately looks at the jewelry box. One of its drawers is opened slightly.

INT. JOE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Dixie pours Cheerios in a bowl in front of Lana who sits in a high stool at the table. Dixie reaches for the milk.

LANA
I don't want milk.

DIXIE
Milk is good for you.

Lana pounds her feet against the chair and--

LANA
I don't want milk. I don't want it.

Dixie tries feeding her the cereal dry. Defiantly, Lana knocks a few Cheerios on the floor. Dixie accidentally steps on them. CRUNCH ... CRUNCH.

DIXIE
Now look what you've made me do.
Who's going to clean this up?

Lana rocks the chair while Dixie tries to feed her again.

LANA
I want to do it. I want to do it.

Finally, Dixie slams the spoon down and --

DIXIE
Fine. Go ahead. Feed yourself, you
brat.

Lana tries but drops more Cheerios on the floor.

DIXIE
You see? This is why I feed you.

Dixie smacks Lana's hand and Lana wails.

DIXIE
STOP CRYING!

She smacks Lana again, but Joe suddenly appears and grabs Dixie by the collar. He picks her up off the chair and throws her out of the kitchen into the living room. Lana continues to wail, and Joe strokes her head and--

JOE
It's OK, Sweetie. I'll be right back.

LIVING ROOM

Joe walks in and, as he approaches Dixie, she retreats to the couch, backpedaling as Joe comes at her.

JOE
Some of your mother's jewelry is gone. What did you do with her diamond necklace?

DIXIE
What do you think?

Joe hyperventilates. He grabs her by the collar and lets go realizing he's out of control.

DIXIE
What are you, insane? What's the matter with you?

JOE
You hocked your mother's necklace?

DIXIE
Mom would've given it to me anyway. That makes it mine.

JOE
Is that how you see it?

DIXIE
Yeah, that's how I see it.

She notices Joe's hands are shaking, and starts to back off.

DIXIE
I have to go to work.

Dixie storms out, and Joe stands in the middle of the living room, breathing heavily, trying to calm himself.

KITCHEN

Lana has stopped crying as Joe walks back in. He summons an easy disposition and pours more Cheerios in the bowl.

LANA

I want to do it by myself.

Joe hands Lana a spoon. She feeds herself but spills cereal on the floor in the process. She cowers a bit, but Joe steps on the cereal on purpose. CRUNCH. CRUNCH.

He throws more cereal on the floor, and she does the same. Joe stomps on the cereal again.

LANA

Me, too. Get me down.

Joe lets her get down from the chair, and after they both stomp on the cereal, they both sit down on the floor, laughing. After they settle down--

JOE

Okay. Now we have to clean up.

LANA

You do it.

Lana bolts to her feet and tries to get around Joe to leave, but Joe blocks her way and sits her on the floor again.

JOE

No. We both caused this mess. Now we both have to clean it up.

He starts putting the Cheerios into the bowl and motions for her to help him. As Joe picks them up--

JOE

Goodbye, Cheerios.

After a moment of obstinacy, she joins in.

LANA

G'bye, Cheerios.

She farts. They both look around for the phantom culprit.

LANA
 (laughing)
 G'bye, barking spider.

While Lana plays with the cereal on the floor, Joe gets up, his hands still shaking. He looks into the living room to--

THE MANTLE

The urn, the Eiffel Tower picture and the photo of his wife.

BACK TO SCENE

Teary-eyed, Joe picks up the wall telephone and hits a number. He watches Lana while he waits. After a few seconds--

JOE
 American Airlines. Reservations.
 (beat)
 Can you tell me how much a flight
 to Paris is from JFK or La Guardia?
 (beat)
 Oh, that much. No, no. I don't want
 to make a reservation now. Thanks.

He hangs up, then, while helping Lana clean up the mess--

JOE
 You never met your Grandmother,
 Lana. She would've loved you so.
 Her heart was this big--

Joe stretches his arms out as far as he can go and then looks through the doorway to the urn.

They finish cleaning up and Lana sits in a Yoga position just like Joe. They stare at each other for a beat.

JOE
 Her name rhymes with your name.
 'Nana'.

LANA
 Nana banana.

JOE
 Well. I was thinking more like
 'Nana', 'Lana'. She taught me a lot
 of things, you know.

Lana just stares at Joe, as if she's really paying attention.

JOE

She taught me that crying does not mean you're weak. And love your spouse even when HE frustrates you. And probably the most important one was 'be on time'.

(chuckles to himself)

And you can never have too many Dunkin Donuts.

LANA

Chocolate. Sprinkles.

As Joe helps her up--

JOE

Come on. Let's go.

EXT. JOE'S HOUSE - FRONT LAWN - DAY

Joe holds a butterfly net while walking Lana around the yard. He points to the trees, birds - everything around them.

JOE

Hello, bird. Hello, trees.

LANA

Hello, bird. Hello, trees.

Joe chases a butterfly and runs wildly about trying to catch it. He flops about in a Monty Python-way, and Lana loves the craziness and laughs hard. She has chocolate on her cheek.

Steven pulls up in his car, gets out and approaches Joe. Joe hands the butterfly net to Lana and yells--

JOE

Run ... run.

Lana runs around the yard trying to catch a butterfly.

STEVEN

Looks like you're having fun.

Joe shakes his head in disgust.

STEVEN

What's the matter?

JOE

I lost it this morning, Steven. She hocked your mother's necklace.

STEVEN

Oh. I guess you don't know then.

JOE

Know what?

STEVEN

Dixie was with some guy downtown who had drugs. Cops frisked him. Charged them both with possession and intent to distribute.

Joe's shoulders slump. He looks back at Lana and sighs.

STEVEN

This is the third time she's in front of the Judge. She might do hard time.

JOE

That does it then. Party's over.

They both watch Lana trying to catch a butterfly. She's full of life and ... happy.

JOE

I hate changing diapers. And I can't get her to go on the potty.

STEVEN

She'll do it when she's ready.

JOE

She's four. Should be time.

They watch Lana frolic about for a few seconds.

JOE

I'm getting a combination safe for the rest of the jewelry. Unless you want it.

STEVEN

Save it for Lana. How's the dancing coming along?

JOE

Don't start, son.

STEVEN

It's good exercise. You'll have more energy if you dive into it.

JOE

Taking care of Lana is enough exercise for me. Believe me.

INT. JOE'S LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY - LATER

Lana plays with a train on a toy bench while Steven watches. Joe brings out a cup of tea and a sippy-cup. He hands the cup to Steven and puts the sippy-cup on the toy bench for Lana.

Joe walks over to the mantle and looks up at the painting of the Eiffel Tower.

STEVEN (V.O.)

Oh, no. Please don't.

JOE

Did you know her grandmother was born in Alsace Lorraine?

STEVEN

Yes. So, go to France and visit her grave.

JOE

How is Pulsar doing?

STEVEN

Down another ten cents a share. Sell a few shares and go to Paris.

JOE

I heard the French are still pissed off at us because of Iraq.

STEVEN

Ok. I'm leaving.

INT. LAW OFFICE RECEPTION AREA - NEXT DAY

Joe sits in the reception area with Lana in his arms. The Receptionist, NANCY, 30s, business all the way, signals Joe.

NANCY

Mr. Almquist will see you now.

INT. LAW OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Joe enters with Lana in his arms. Mr. Almquist greets them.

ALMQUIST

Hello, Mr. Gregory. Oh, wow. Isn't she a cutie-pie?

He goes to pat her, but she buries her head in Joe's neck.

JOE

She's either terribly shy or she dances like those crazy characters on Sid-The-Science-Kid.

ALMQUIST

Yes. I see she's a charmer. So, you want custody of her?

Joe sits and lets Lana down. Almquist hits the buzzer and Nancy comes in.

ALMQUIST

Nancy, can you take Lana and--
(To Lana)
Would you like a lollipop?

Joe leads Lana to Nancy.

JOE

Oo. Can you get me one, too?

Almquist waits for them to leave.

ALMQUIST

I have to tell you, Mr. Gregory, without the judge ruling on her drug charge, getting custody of Lana will be extremely difficult, especially if your daughter's living with you and working.

JOE

My daughter is involved with drugs again, and I can't kick her out because she'll take Lana with her and ruin her life.

ALMQUIST

I don't know, Mr. Gregory. Just let me know how she does on that arrest charge. If she goes to jail, come back and then we'll be able to do something. Right now, it's best to just sit and wait.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - LATER

Lana runs from aisle to aisle. She removes an item and Joe puts it back. She removes another and Joe puts that back. This continues until she finds a balloon. She bellows--

LANA

Balloon. Balloon.

Joe shakes his head and she cries.

JOE

Stop crying. That's jibba-jabber.
No jibba-jabber.

LANA

I want it. I want it.

JOE

OK. You can have it.

Lana stops crying.

JOE

You can have it, but you have to go on the potty first.

Lana frowns as if she's going to let out with another yell. Instead, she grabs Joe's hand and--

LANA

Potty. Let's go.

Joe leads Lana to the restrooms.

OUTSIDE DEPARTMENT STORE'S RESTROOM - HALLWAY

Joe and Lana enter the hallway, but Joe stops and hesitates a beat trying to decide which door to enter. He enters the MEN'S ROOM with Lana.

TOY SECTION OF DEPARTMENT STORE - MINUTES LATER

Joe holds a string with a helium balloon attached to the other end. He looks down one isle. No Lana.

JOE

Lana ... where are you?

He frantically looks up and down the isles, but can't find her. Suddenly, a voice sounds in the distance--

LANA (O.S.)

(in distress)

Stuck. Stuck ...

While Lana continues to call for him, Joe heads to the voice and finds her behind a partition with her hand on a mouse glue-pad. She holds up the pad like a baseball mitt.

LANA

Stuck. Stuck.

Joe just stands there, savoring the moment. Chuckles. He takes out his cell phone and snaps a picture.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - NIGHT

Joe exercises with seven other STUDENTS.

CHILDREN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lana plays with other CHILDREN while being watched by a FACILITATOR, 20s.

Lana sees Joe exercise through a window and gets inspired to grab another child's hand.

LANA

Twirl. Spin.

INT. RECREATIONAL CENTER - ANOTHER DAY

Joe fills out a form at the desk. A poster on the wall displays girls performing gymnastic exercises.

CLERK

That'll be 140 dollars cash, or 150
if you pay by charge card.

Joe takes out his wallet and starts paying with cash. It's hard for him to let go of his money. He hesitates, watches Lana dance for a few beats, then gets a renewed spirit and finishes paying the Clerk.

CHILDREN'S EXERCISE ROOM - LATER

Joe and MOTHERS watch their CHILDREN through a window.

MOTHER ONE

Is that one over there yours?

JOE

Granddaughter.

MOTHER ONE

She's incredibly beautiful.

JOE

Thank you.

Joe watches Lana with pride as she runs down a pathway and jumps on a trampoline.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Dixie finishes mopping the kitchen floor while the SOUND of a motor outside indicates Joe is mowing the lawn. Lana is playing in the next room. The phone rings. Dixie answers it.

DIXIE

I told you not to call me here.

She ducks into the closet for privacy. Whispering--

DIXIE

How much? For an ounce? That's too much. OK. OK. Bring it to me tonight, and I'll give you the money then.

While Dixie talks in the closet, Lana comes bursting into the kitchen and slips on the wet floor and falls, hitting the top of her forehead on the bottom step of a stool.

As Lana screams, Dixie comes out of the closet. She grabs a dish towel and covers Lana's bleeding head. She panics and runs with Lana out the door to Joe.

EXT. HOSPITAL - LATER IN THE DAY

Joe, Dixie and Lana walk out of the hospital. They don't speak until they reach the car.

JOE
Seventeen stitches.

DIXIE
It wasn't my fault...

Dixie goes to say something else but Joe holds his hand out to stop her.

JOE
Nothing's ever your fault.

EXT. JOE'S HOUSE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Dixie bolts from Joe's car and as she gets into her car--

DIXIE
I gotta go to work.

INT. BATHROOM - SAME DAY - NIGHT

Lana, in pajamas, brushes her teeth with Joe. She stands on a stool and follows Joe's lead. She sips from the cup and tries to spit but drools instead. They wipe their hands and mouth.

LANA
Bye, brush. Bye, toothpaste.

They put their toothbrushes in a cup.

LANA'S BEDROOM

Joe watches Lana use the mattress as a trampoline.

LANA
Look at me. Look at me.

She purposely falls, bounces and then does a somersault. She sits up and stares in the mirror and touches her stitches.

LANA
I have a boo-boo.

JOE
It makes you look more beautiful.

While Joe tucks her in--

JOE
Okay Sweetie, here's my message for
tonight.
(thinking)
Have respect for animals.

LANA
Meow.

JOE
Good night, Sweetie.

LANA
G'night, Gramps. I Love you.

Joe has a hard time saying the words, so he just gives a sign language for 'I love you'. Lana tries to do the same, but can't quite manage the fingers right.

INT. BOOK STORE - NEXT DAY

Joe walks in with Lana in his arms. He puts her down.

JOE
The store is all yours.

Lana dashes to the children's section and pushes as many book buttons as she can: Elmo's voice, the alphabet song, etc.

She finds one SOUND which intrigues her and hits that button over and over again. Joe watches Lana with intrigue. He sees the passionate effect the sound has her.

He records the SOUND on his cell phone as she hits that button again and again.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dixie, drunk or high, stumbles in the house. Whispering--

DIXIE
Oopsy daisy. Shhh!

BEDROOM HALLWAY

Dixie cringes at the CRACKLING floorboards while tip-toeing to her bedroom. She enters and slowly closes the door. After a beat, the light under Joe's door goes off.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Joe, Almquist and JONES, suited, 40s, sit behind the bar while the JUDGE sits at the bench.

JUDGE

I'm not postponing this hearing.
Where is your client, Mr. Jones?

MR. JONES

I don't know, Your Honor.

Almquist gets up while waving papers and --

ALMQUIST

Your Honor, she pleaded her
possession charge to a misdemeanor.
We all know she's a druggie.

Jones goes to object, but the Judge beats him to it.

JUDGE

Almquist, knock it off. You know
better than to speculate in front
of me. Miss Gregory was guilty of
loitering. Not a good enough reason
to take away her daughter.

In the back of the courtroom Dixie stumbles through the door.

DIXIE

I'm here, Judge. I'm here ... I'm
here, body and soul.

Dixie stumbles to the desk and sits. She turns to Joe and--

DIXIE

Got the firing squad ready, Pops?

JUDGE

Miss Gregory? Are you high?

DIXIE

No more drugs for me, your honor.
Nope. Only the legal hoochy-hoochy
stuff from now on.

JUDGE

You come to my courtroom drunk?

DIXIE

But, I never drink in front of
Lana. Scout's honor, Judge.

JUDGE

(Sighs.)

Tell me why I shouldn't give your
father custody of your daughter,
Miss Gregory?

DIXIE

Him, Judge? Do you know at school
he promised to be at a father-
daughter's square dance, but he
never showed up.

She let's out with an inebriated burp.

DIXIE

Not only did he leave me standing
there as the only kid without a
father, he didn't even pick me up.
Had to walk four miles to get home.
And he never bought me a bike.

She burps again.

JUDGE

I see. I think I've seen enough.
I'll finish this process today and
notify Child Protective Services of
my decision.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

While washing the dishes, Joe watches Lana out the window
playing in a fenced-in area with Steven. The doorbell rings.

FOYER

Joe opens the door. A mailman hands Joe a NOTICE and a pen.

MAILMAN

Please sign here.

KITCHEN

Joe enters, opens the notice, reads it and grunts. He tosses it on the table, then continues washing the dishes. Dixie enters, heads right to the coffee pot, and pours a cup.

DIXIE

If you kick me out I'll take Lana with me.

Joe points to the notice on the table.

JOE

Better read the notice first before you make any bold threats.

EXT. BACKYARD - SANDBOX

Steven plays with Lana while a radio plays besides them. As the yelling and screaming in the house takes a decibel hike, Steven turns up the volume on the radio. Lana FARTS.

STEVEN

Was that you?

LANA

It was the Barking Spider.

Giggling, she points to nothing in particular and chases the phantom spider to the shed.

BACK IN THE KITCHEN

Dixie has one foot out of the kitchen and ready to bolt.

DIXIE

She drives me nuts anyway with her incessant whining. She's a demon-spawn-of-Satan. You can have her.

JOE

How dare you say that about Lana?

DIXIE

Oo! Lana. She's so perfect. She's all yours. I'll pack and leave tomorrow. I'm going to work.

Dixie leaves in a huff and exits the house.

LIVING ROOM

Joe saunters in slowly and looks up at his wife's picture and whispers to it--

JOE
I could use a little help here.

EXT. JOE'S HOUSE - NEXT DAY

Joe gardens while Lana chases a butterfly. A sedan pulls up and Dixie bursts through the front door with a suitcase.

DIXIE
I'll get the rest of my stuff some other time. Good riddance.

LANA
Mommy, Mommy. Don't go.

Lana runs up to Dixie. She hugs Lana.

DIXIE
You stay here, Honey. I'm sick. Mommy needs to get fixed.

LANA
Don't go.

Lana hugs her leg, sits on her foot and won't let go. Dixie, sobbing, looks to Joe for some help.

Joe retrieves the net and slams it to the ground catching an imaginary butterfly.

JOE
Lana. Quick. Come here. I caught a butterfly.

Lana lets go of Dixie and runs to Joe giving Dixie time to throw her suitcase in the sedan and drive off.

PRESENT-DAY LANA (V.O.)
My mom leaving should have left a bolder imprint on my mind. But I was hurting too. Interestingly, what I remember about that day was I caught my first butterfly.

Lana stalks a white-winged butterfly and flops the net on top of it. Joe comes over and makes a fuss over the event.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - TRAINING ROOM - ANOTHER DAY

A dance instructor shows Joe some dance moves and he follows making it more of an exercise than an enjoyable dance routine. Joe can see Lana playing with other CHILDREN through a window cut-out that joins the dance room with a play room.

Joe dances with great intensity. The music stops and the dance ends with Joe gasping for air and sweating.

EXT. CARNIVAL - DAY

While Joe and Steven watch Lana and Brad on a ride--

STEVEN

You got custody now, so I wouldn't worry about anything.

JOE

I'm not sure I'm capable of raising Lana on my own, Steven. I'm too old. I make too many mistakes. And I don't have the patience for this.

Steven laughs.

JOE

What's so funny?

STEVEN

You haven't even noticed, have you?

JOE

Noticed what?

STEVEN

Never seen you so engaged in life. How do you suppose that happened?

Joe continues to watch the kids while pondering the question.

EXT. SOME STREET IN TOWN - NIGHT

Dixie, drunk, falls out of a car. The car speeds away and she staggers down a street.

A quick blast of a POLICE CAR siren leads to a mug shot of her. The caption: B MISDEMEANOR, 1 COUNT, LOITERING; PUBLIC DRUNKENNESS.

INT. VIEW ROOM OF A GYMNAS TIC SCHOOL - DAY

Joe watches a six-year-old Lana through a viewing window. She does somersaults with great accuracy.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

While Joe and Lana eat, Joe reads from a lesson book.

JOE
C-C-at. H-h-at. B-b-at. Spell FLAT.

LANA
F-L-A-T

JOE
Spell 'spider'

LANA
S-P-I-D-E-R

Joe claps and Lana stands and takes a bow. The telephone rings and Joe picks up the phone.

JOE
Hello.

Dixie's voice (incoherent) comes through. He hangs up, and turns to Lana.

JOE
Okay. Lesson for today. You know what it is? Don't make a promise you can't keep.

INT. JOE'S KITCHEN - EVENING

While Joe and an eight-year-old Lana eat, Joe reads from a 3rd grade lesson book.

JOE
Special.

LANA
S-P-E-C-I-A-L

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Lana and Gramps sit in a church listening to a sermon.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - LANA'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Lana kneels beside the bed saying her prayers.

LANA

Dear God, Gramps said there's no
hell. Is that true? Because my
teacher said bad people go to hell.

INT. CHURCH ROOM - AA MEETING - NIGHT

AA pamphlets, coffee urn, and the Big Book are tell-tale signs that a AA meeting is in progress. Someone up front is giving a life story. Dixie appears attentive, healthy.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD - DAY

In the stands Joe watches a 10-year-old Lana play softball. At bat, she hits the ball and runs to first. Safe.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL TRACK - THREE YEARS LATER - DAY

Thirteen-year-old Lana struggles in practice running with fellow students. Joe, by the fence, takes out his cell phone and plays that SOUND Leah was so addicted to years ago.

Inspired by the sound, she accelerates her stride and finishes ahead of other students. She bends over, huffing breaths to the ground.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

While Joe and Lana eat dinner, Joe reads from a book.

JOE

$C^2 = A^2 + B^2$

LANA

Pythagoras.

JOE
Thirty-two feet per second squared.

LANA
Galileo.

JOE
E equals M-C squared.

LANA
Please. Come on. Everyone knows
that one. Einstein.

JOE
Okay, Brainiac. Here's the most
important lesson for today.

Lana wiggles a bit in her chair, sits up, and waits.

JOE
Education doesn't necessarily mean
intelligence.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL TRACK - DAY

At track practice, Lana smokes behind the stands with a couple of classmates including a cute BOY with a fuzzy lip. The coach sees them.

PRESENT-DAY LANA (V.O.)
When I became a teenager, I hung
out with a bad crowd who smoked. I
thought it was cool to be in the in-
crowd. In my defense, I was drawn
in by a cute kid with a fuzzy lip.
I forget his name.

A few yards away the COACH, 40s, with a whistle around his neck, walks into view. Busted.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF JOE'S HOUSE - DAY

The Track Coach walks Lana up the porch. Joe comes out to meet them and Lana runs into the house.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - LANA'S BEDROOM - HOURS LATER

Joe knocks on the door and enters.

JOE
What's going on, Lana?

LANA
Nothing. What's going on with you?

Joe sighs - his disappointment is apparent.

LANA
I can smoke if I want to.

JOE
Well, actually, you can't.

LANA
What are you going to do? How can you stop me?

JOE
Just don't make any plans for tomorrow.

LANA
Tomorrow's Saturday, and I got track practice.

JOE
I talked to the coach. He knows you'll be late. Be ready at nine.

LANA
Where are we going?

JOE
Just be ready at nine.

INT. HOSPITAL - CANCER WARD - NEXT DAY

As Lana and Joe walk with the nurse into the cancer ward, the nurse explains the visuals MOS; that is, without sound.

She is obviously explaining the disease of emphysema as the PATIENTS are either walking around listlessly or lying in bed with symptoms the nurse is explaining, presumably.

Some have canisters of oxygen with them, others struggle breathing on their own. Most look like they are ready to die.

PRESENT-DAY LANA (V.O.)

He didn't get angry or ground me for smoking. He got the nurses permission, and he simply took me to the cancer ward at the hospital where people were dying of emphysema, mainly from smoking.

The patients show no mercy in displaying their disabilities to Lana. As they progress down the aisle of beds, Lana gets increasingly more disturbed at what she sees.

The nurse stops at a station where the patient gasps for breath having a tenacious hold on life. She continues explaining (MOS).

A patient walks by with a oxygen tank, like a zombie.

The MOS is over, and the nurse's voice fades in.

NURSE

As eating becomes more difficult, extensive weight loss is common.

At another bedside a patient coughs and spits blood into a handkerchief. He gasps, purses his lips, then coughs again.

NURSE

Some patients may cough up blood. They learn different ways of breathing, such as pursing their lips to control the air flow or leaning over a counter with their weight resting on their arms ...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON - LATER

Joe and Lana enter, and Lana runs upstairs to her bedroom. The door SLAMS. Joe heads for the kitchen and throws the car keys on the hallway table.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Joe enters, pours himself a cup of coffee, sits at the table, grabs the paper and reads. Seconds later Lana bursts into the kitchen, throws down two packs of cigarettes on the table.

LANA

Come on. I got practice to go to.

Joe grabs the keys and they leave.

PRESENT-DAY LANA (V.O.)

That was the day I learned what love was about. I began loving Gramps even more. He might've had a tough time saying the words, but I knew he loved me. I knew he had my back, and I needed to show him the same. Exactly how, I didn't know.

INT. DINNER TABLE AT JOE'S HOUSE - NIGHT - MONTHS LATER

While Joe and Lana eat, Lana stares at a couple of pictures of a boy in her notebook. Joe reads from a paper next to him.

JOE

Discombobulated.

LANA

Confused.

JOE

Good. Pungent.

LANA

Pungent. Something that sharply affects your smell or taste.

JOE

Not just the senses. How about pungent wit. Pungent remarks.

They continue eating. She touches the picture.

JOE

Is that Larry?

LANA

No. It's Frank.

JOE

I thought you liked Larry.

LANA

I think I like Frank more. I don't know what to do, Gramps.

JOE

Do what your heart says. But remember, you can't ride two bicycles at the same time. Someone gets hurt doing that. I don't want that someone to be you.

(pause)

You know, we should have a talk ...

LANA

No. We have sex education in school. I'm fully aware of the repercussions of sex.

Joe groans. Lana closes the book with an attitude.

JOE

OK. Ok. I'll stop.

After a beat--

LANA

Mom said you gave her money to have an abortion when she was pregnant with me. Is that true?

Joe looks away, then a deep sigh.

LANA

Are you angry that I know?

Joe shakes his head.

LANA

Well, you look sad, then.

JOE

I'm noticing you're a young lady. Please don't grow up. Nothing good can come of it. It's just a trap.

LANA

Is it true, Gramps? About the abortion?

JOE

Yes. It's true. I gave your mother \$1000 to get one.

LANA

But you told me you're pro-life.
You're against abortions.

JOE

I am now. Back then, I wasn't. I
changed my beliefs.

LANA

But you've taught me if you believe
strongly in something don't let
anyone sway you.

JOE

Sometimes the world changes and you
have to change along with it.

LANA

How do you know when your beliefs
are wrong?

JOE

You have to listen to your heart.

LANA

What made you change from pro-
choice to pro-life?

JOE

When did you get so philosophical?

Lana shrugs, but remains steadfast in her gaze.

LANA

Come on. Tell me. What made you
change from pro-choice to pro-life?

Joe looks deeply into Lana's eyes, and leans forward.

JOE

You.

A moment passes. Lana, filled with emotion, gets up and hugs
Joe who takes the hug with a smile.

LANA

I love you, Gramps.

JOE

Same here, Kiddo.

INT. JOE'S KITCHEN - ANOTHER DAY

Two empty plates sit on the table. Joe is doing the dishes.

There's a SOUND of the front door opening and closing - more of a SLAM/BAM. After a few seconds, Lana enters and throws her books on the floor and plops down at the table. Silence.

JOE

How was practice?

LANA

OK.

More silence.

JOE

What's with the attitude?

LANA

My best friend dissed me in front of Frank and a bunch of other kids.

JOE

Rebecca?

LANA

Yes. She called me stupid.

JOE

In front of boys.

LANA

And some girls.

Joe sits and folds his hands. He waits.

LANA

We were talking about who the best singers are. Rebecca said she liked Alden Richard. Frank liked Cheryl Cole. I said I liked Justin Bieber and she laughed and squinched her face at me. My best friend squinched me. She said money has ruined Justin. I said Justin Bieber can do anything. He sings, plays piano. He's great on the drums, he can dance, and he plays basketball. And you know what Rebecca said?

Joe shakes his head.

LANA

She said Justin Bieber is gay. And anyone who likes him is gay.

Lana starts crying.

JOE

I like Lady Ga-Ga and I'm not gay.

Lana sobs louder. She gets up, throws her arms up and--

LANA

You don't understand.

INT. LANA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lana bursts in, slams the door behind her and buries her head in the pillow and cries.

A wall poster of Justin Bieber faces her. After a beat there's a soft knock on the door.

JOE (O.S.)

May I come in?

Joe enters, sits next to her. She sits up, and lets out with a deep sigh.

LANA

She was my best friend, Gramps.

JOE

Well, then be a loyal friend.

LANA

Why should I?

JOE

Too bad you never knew Nana. She was a treasure. She used to tell me our children will make their own mistakes, and when they do, forgive them and love them anyway. Forgive Rebecca. And love her anyway.

Lana looks at Joe, stunned by his response.

JOE

She's your best friend. Just tell her how you feel. She probably doesn't even know she hurt you.

She looks up at the Bieber poster, and sighs.

LANA

Money did not spoil him.

JOE

Money does funny things to people.

LANA

Not Justin. He's perfect.

Joe chuckles hard.

JOE

Look, Lana. The only thing some people care about these days is how much money they have or don't have. And that struggle becomes lifelong and slowly eats away at dreams.

LANA

You got to have money to do things. You gotta eat. I don't understand.

JOE

You will in time. I'll make sure you understand. I don't want you making the same mistakes I did.

LANA

Like what, Gramps?

JOE

I used to think money was more important than Nana's dreams. She always wanted to go to Paris, but I didn't tell you the lame excuses I gave her, like 'Which would you rather have, a remodeled kitchen that'll last forever, or a trip to Paris that would last for a week?'

(pats Lana on the head)

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

What I didn't realize is a trip lasts forever, a place I can go to in my memories as I get older, or after one of us passes on. Right now all I have is memories, and I can care less about the kitchen cabinets. I got some good memories, but I'd sleep a lot better if I had the memory of making Nana's dream come true.

Lana sits with that thought. After a moment she leans in and hugs him.

LANA

I love you, Gramps.

Joe nods - still has a hard time voicing the words.

JOE

Right back at ya.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Joe turns to a news channel on the TV.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Disney announced it will sue Pulsar for intellectual property rights on seven projects. A spokesperson for Pulsar said he didn't know two of the creative staff worked for Disney on similar projects ...

Joe shuts the TV off, dials on his phone and waits.

JOE

Steven. I'm watching the news.

STEVEN (V.O.)

I know. It doesn't look good, Dad.

JOE

How bad?

STEVEN (V.O.)

You lost well over half. It's my fault. I should've stopped you.

JOE

I knew what I was getting into.
How's Lana's college fund?

STEVEN (V.O.)

You don't have any Pulsar in hers.
It's actually growing.
(a long pause)
So, what do you want to do?

JOE

What are you going to do?

STEVEN (V.O.)

I'm keeping the stock and riding it
out.

JOE

I will too, then.

STEVEN (V.O.)

But you have much more than I do.
You're whole portfolio is--

JOE

It doesn't matter. It's only money.

There's silence over the phone. Finally --

STEVEN (V.O.)

It's only money? Really. Wow. If
you could see what I hear.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - NEXT DAY

Joe and Lana are waiting for their food at the counter when a white and black COUPLE, in their 30's, walk in and are in the middle of an argument -- a loud argument.

WHITE WOMAN

Don't talk to me that way, you
kinky-haired slum lord. What? Don't
look at me that way? I'll talk to
you anyway I want.

BLACK MAN

All you think about is money.
Money, money, money. You should've
told me you were a gold-digger.

WHITE WOMAN

I don't have to tell you anything.

The attendant brings up a tray of food and Joe walks up to retrieve it. The White Woman looks at a wide-eyed Lana as...

BLACK MAN

You're a miserable witch.

WHITE WOMAN

Stifle it, Daniel. Kids are here.

With tray in hand, Joe walks past the couple and--

JOE

Why don't you two take your problems outside.

The black man just points at Joe as he passes by. Joe and Lana sit at a booth far away from the couple.

LANA

Oh, wow. That couple reminds me so much of that day when Bill, my father, came to see Mom.

JOE

How do you feel about that? What do you think about your mom having a relationship with a black man?

LANA

A man and a woman should be together for reasons of personal compatibility, not race.

JOE

Wow! That's a very mature thing to say at your age.

LANA

Well ... it's true. It's difficult being me because people don't know how to identify me. Am I white? Am I black? But you, Gramps ... you never had that problem. How come?

Joe stares at Lana while preparing to eat.

JOE

I don't know, Honey. Maybe it was the way you looked at me when you were an infant. You peered into my soul, I think, and I never saw you as white or black. You're simply my granddaughter.

LANA

But my mother or father don't see me that way. No one sees me that way, except you.

JOE

I'm sure your father sees you that way, too.

LANA

I doubt it.

An awkward pause ensues.

LANA

Gramps, how did my mother behave while she was growing up.

Joe takes his time thinking.

JOE

I wasn't a very good father, Lana. Sometimes I feel I was a rotten husband as well. People don't get second chances. You only get one chance to bring up a child. It's like that couple over there.

They are still arguing. The woman storms out with food, and the man follows. Both are demonstrative in their walk.

JOE

I look at you sometimes and wish I had a second chance with your mother, and Nana for that matter. Maybe it's time I tell what I know about your mother and how things really were back in the day. I was not the best father or husband ...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - LATER

Joe opens Lana's bedroom door and peeks in. Lana is asleep.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joe enters and looks hard in the mirror. He opens the medicine cabinet and retrieves a pill canister marked "Pentobarbital". He dumps the contents into his hand.

PRESENT-DAY LANA (V.O.)

Gramps confessed to me a turning point in his life was the night he entertained the thought of killing himself. The day we had that big talk. He felt like a failure, and was suicidal.

JOE

(into the mirror)

I heard it's painless, my dear. Five of these should do it. Lana would think I had a heart attack. She'd be better off with Steven anyway. I'm too old.

PRESENT-DAY LANA (V.O.)

But as fate would have it, I got sick and interrupted his plans.

All of a sudden Joe hears Lana puking.

INT. LANA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joe bursts in while Lana pukes on the bed and floor. He rushes her in the hallway.

BATHROOM

Joe comes in with Lana and turns on the shower and adjusts the temperature. As she starts undressing--

LANA

Please, go get my bathrobe.

LANA'S BEDROOM

Joe scouts the room for her bathrobe. He finds it hanging over the bed. He grabs it and runs to the bathroom.

BATHROOM

Joe comes in and sits on the toilet and waits. Lana finishes washing herself. She shuts off the water and shoves her hand from behind the curtain. Joe gives her the robe and waits for her to put it on.

JOE

You okay?

She opens the curtain and falls out of the tub and into his arms. She leans into the toilet and vomits again.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Joe, on the phone, appears frantic as he listens to--

VOICE (V.O.)

All emergency units are at a fire.
All the ambulances are taken.

Joe slams the phone down then runs up the stairs.

INT. JOE'S CAR -- LATER

Joe pulls into the hospital Emergency Entrance with Lana.

Sirens and flashing lights of the Emergency vehicles highlight the frantic activity as medics gurney-in burn and smoke victims from all directions.

Joe parks on the lawn. Lana, sitting in the front seat, has a bucket between her legs. She has nothing left to vomit.

INT. HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Joe carries Lana in and is met by a mob of doctors, nurses, victims on gurneys, and family members in the waiting area.

He runs through the double doors into the emergency area where yelling and commotion reign. He puts Lana down, and she stands on her own but leans on Joe.

A DOCTOR appears and opens Lana's robe. Joe appears in shock at the sight of her sunken-in stomach and emaciated body while the doctor takes a second to check her heart rate and other vital signs.

DOCTOR

She's severely dehydrated. Take her
and follow me.

Joe grabs Lana and follows the doctor into a nearby empty
office space. The doctor grabs a NURSE and--

DOCTOR

Mix a half a teaspoon salt, six
level teaspoons of sugar with a
quart of water and bring it back
here. Quick. Go.

The nurse leaves. The Doctor takes a spoon from a counter,
wipes it clean and hands it to Joe.

DOCTOR

We'll replenish her fluids and
electrolytes. Give her a spoonful
every few minutes until her urine
becomes clear in color. If she
can't keep it down, wait about 20
minutes and try again.

(To Lana)

You be a good girl and take this,
okay? Everything will be okay.

The doctor leaves as the Nurse returns with the fluids, hands
a mug to Joe, and leaves. Joe begins feeding Lana.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - LANA'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Joe enters holding a sleeping Lana who wears a hospital gown.
Her head is cradled in his neck. He sees the mess on her bed.

INT. JOE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joe carefully places Lana in his bed, and starts to sob.

JOE

Dear God ... thank you. Thank you.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DANCE STUDIO -- NIGHT

A 16-year-old Lana dances with other PEOPLE, Joe included.

PRESENT-DAY LANA (V.O.)

So, I lived through that ordeal and all was well for a few years. I'm really into sports and dancing. Gramps tried dancing but he was a work in progress. Still is.

TEACHER

Today we're also going to learn a move called the Stanky-Legg. It has great motion for the legs and hips. Like so. Follow me.

The class follows the teacher. Lana laughs at Joe trying to dance, then shows off her ability. Within seconds she's doing the Stanky-Legg as well as the teacher.

A BUZZER goes off leaving most of the class trying to catch their breaths.

TEACHER

OK. That's it for today, folks.
Next week same time, same place.

EXT. DANCE STUDIO PARKING LOT - NIGHT

As Joe and Lana walk to the car.

LANA

I never thought I'd ever see you do hip-hop moves.

JOE

Is that what it was? I can hardly walk. It's harder than it looks.

EXT. JOE'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT - A FEW MINUTES LATER

They get out of the car and walk towards the house.

JOE

And what's with the booty shaking?
That's not dancing.

LANA

That's just people showing off.

Joe notices the front door is ajar. He rushes inside.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Joe and Lana enter. The house has been ransacked and Joe stands there, stunned. He then runs upstairs.

INT. JOE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joe rushes to the closet, lifts a trap door, opens the safe, sees his jewelry box, opens it, and sighs in relief.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

A forensic COP dusts for fingerprints while Joe talks to a plain-clothes POLICEMAN. Joe hands him a sheet of paper.

JOE

That's what I think is missing. Silverware, a coin collection, a few other things. I have jewelry in a safe upstairs. It was hidden, and they didn't get it.

POLICEMAN

Can't promise anything. I'll check these items out and notify the local pawn shops. If they try to hock any of this stuff around town, we'll nab them. It's not that easy, usually, but maybe we'll get lucky.

The other cops are ready to leave. They nod to each other.

POLICEMAN

We'll let you know if anything develops, Mr. Gregory.

They exit and Lana comes down the stairs and sits with Joe.

LANA

Nothing was taken from my room.

JOE

I don't think they wanted crayons.

LANA

Very funny. Do you think Mom--?

JOE

No. Yes. No. I don't want to think she had anything to do with this.

Lana gives Joe a hug and leaves.

INT. LANA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT - WEEKS LATER

Lana fans out a dozen pictures of a boy on the table.

After a few beats Joe walks in. Lana is sobbing. He pushes the pictures away as he sits down next to her.

LANA

Adam broke up with me.

She wipes the tears from her face.

LANA

I feel like my heart's been in a blender. I want to die.

Joe grabs her notebook and pen. He scribbles a note, rips the page out and hands it to Lana. She reads it.

JOE

It says, "Adam is my only love. I'll never love another." If that is true, please sign it.

She signs it with no hesitation.

JOE

Now let's take the pictures you've got here and pin them up wherever we feel like it.

Joe gathers the photos and retrieves a scotch tape dispenser on Lana's bureau.

LANA'S BEDROOM

He stands on the bed and tapes a picture to the ceiling. He hops down and tapes a picture to the wall.

BATHROOM

They enter and Joe tapes an 'Adam' picture next to the mirror. He hands the pictures and the tape to Lana.

LANA

What are you doing?

JOE

Go into the kitchen, living room, everywhere in the house, and pin the rest of these up so you can see them wherever you go. He'll be the first person you see when you wake up and the last thing you'll see when you go to sleep. By the end of the week, the hurt will be manageable, I promise. I warn you, though, anger will creep in and replace what you feel now. But in a month there will be no feeling at all. You'll have pushed him out of your heart altogether.

MONTAGE - LANA GETTING OVER ADAM

- Lana brushes her teeth while looking at the picture.
- Lana stops at the front door to look at the picture of Adam before she leaves the house.
- Lana ignores a picture of Adam on the kitchen cabinet.
- Lana brushes her teeth again - this time she gives the raspberry sound as she looks at the picture.
- Lana talks to another boy at school.
- Lana walks into the bathroom, draws circles around Adam's eyes with her lipstick, then brushes her teeth, humming.
- Lana takes Adam's pictures down from around the house.
- Joe hands Lana the note she signed. She laughs.

END MONTAGE:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL TRACK - DAY

Joe sits in the stands watching the track COACH at the finish line with a stop watch in one hand. The coach raises his other hand.

AT THE STARTING LINE

Two GIRLS line up and take their marks.

Lana lines up behind them with another TEAMMATE, positioning themselves as the next duo in line.

AT THE FINISH LINE

The coach drops his arm and clicks the watch. After a few seconds pass the first two girls buzz past the finish line.

COACH
Six-eight. NEXT!

AT THE STARTING LINE

Lana steps up with her teammate and they get set. The coach drops his arm and they're off.

AT THE FINISH LINE

Lana crosses the finish line behind the teammate.

COACH
Six-nine.

LATER

Joe watches Lana run a longer distance and she leads a pack of ten. A shadow appears over Joe. It's Dixie looking better than the last time Joe saw her. Fit. Healthy. She sits.

Dixie sees Lana cross the finish line way ahead of everyone.

JOE
She's a better distance runner than a sprinter.

DIXIE
I wanted to tell you I had nothing to do with the break-in. I came to invite you to a speaker's meeting Tuesday night at St. Anthony's.

ON LANA

She sees Dixie trotting down the stands and off the field.

INT. CHURCH AA MEETING - NIGHT

Dixie sits in the front row as a SPEAKER is finishing up.

SPEAKER

I thank you all for coming and
sharing this moment with me.

The Speaker sits, and the LEADER steps up to the podium.

LEADER

The next speaker tonight is Dixie.

Dixie comes up and scans the audience. She sees Joe entering
and taking a seat in the last row.

DIXIE

Hello, I'm Dixie and I'm a cross-
addicted alcoholic.

GROUP AS ONE VOICE

Hi, Dixie.

DIXIE

But for the grace of God, I'm here
today instead of ten feet under.

ON JOE

While Dixie speaks, Joe shows little emotion.

DIXIE (O.S.)

I've been struggling to stay sober
for a long time. Today has been
three months, the longest I've ever
been sober in almost two decades.

Some people clap. Joe remains emotionless.

LATER

Dixie walks up to Joe who waits for her in the back of the
room. She fields 'congratulations' along the way.

DIXIE

I'm glad you made it, Dad.

She waits for a response, but just gets a grunt.

DIXIE
Would it kill you to say
'congratulations'?

JOE
What do you want from me, Dixie?

DIXIE
I want to see Lana. I just want to
see her. She's my daughter.

JOE
Call me when you have three more
months under your belt.

Joe starts to leave, then turns back.

JOE
Listen, Dixie. Lana has found the
wherewithal to be a happy person
despite growing up in a motherless
environment. If she harbors wounds,
she disguises them well. I warn
you, for her sake, not yours, don't
screw this up. And if you had
anything to do with the break-in...

He stops after seeing Dixie tear up

JOE
She's got a basketball game on
Tuesday. Be there. And when you see
her don't slobber over her like a
wounded absentee parent trying to
make up for lost time.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - TUESDAY - DAY

The doorbell rings and Joe answers it. The plain-clothes
Policeman stands and politely nods.

POLICEMAN
Hello, Mr. Gregory. We caught one
of the thieves this afternoon.

JOE
Oh, that's good.

POLICEMAN

They tried to hock the silverware
and coin collection. Said a woman
who used to live here was the
ringleader.

Lana appears and stands next to Joe.

POLICEMAN

We found her, and she says she's
your daughter, but denies any
wrongdoing.

The policeman hands Joe a picture of Dixie. He looks at it
briefly, then returns it.

JOE

Yes, that's my daughter.

POLICEMAN

Do you want to press charges?

Joe looks to Lana who doesn't give him a chance to respond.

LANA

Yes. He does.

JOE

Go get ready for the game.

LANA

It's not for another five hours.

POLICEMAN

Actually, it doesn't matter. If you
don't, we will. But you'll need to
come down to the precinct to
identify the items at least.

Joe nods and turns to Lana.

JOE

I'll be right back. And stay
focused.

Joe leaves with the Policeman.

INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - GIRLS BASKETBALL GAME

Joe watches Lana playing first string point guard. She takes the ball down and passes off to the CENTER who scores.

Lana goes for a lay-up. The tall DEFENSIVE CENTER comes in and blocks it. A time-out is called by Lana's Coach.

Joe stands up and when he catches Lana's eye, he mimes a 'Stanky-Legg' move. Lana looks confused, so he mimes a dribble-and-shoot move. Lana nods. She gets it.

She huddles with the coach and they break. They go back to the game and when Lana gets the ball she does the 'Stanky-Legg' move catching the tall defender off balance. Lana then drives to the hoop and scores. The half-time buzzer goes off.

Dixie walks in and spots an unsavory character sitting in the stands. She sits next to him and after a few seconds they both get up and leave.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GYMNASIUM - LATER

While in the fourth quarter the score is tied. The other team scores and Lana receives the ball and races past Joe who extends his cell phone and plays that SOUND Lana is so enamored with.

Lana dribbles down the court and goes in for a lay-up. SCORE!

On defense she covers an opponent who runs past her and tosses the ball to a teammate who scores.

Frustrated, but determined, she prepares to go on offense. As she starts to inbound the ball, she sees her mother standing by the door. Flustered, she passes the ball and it is stolen by the defense. The opponent goes in for the quick score.

Dixie staggers onto the court and the Ref blows his whistle to stop the play.

DIXIE

Come on girl. You can do better than that. Give me a 'L'. Give me an 'A'. Give me an 'N' ...

FROM JOE'S POV

He stands, powerless to do anything. But he watches a uniform SECURITY GUARD rushing Dixie, and while he pulls her off the court she finishes her recitation.

DIXIE

... give me an 'A'. What you got?
Lana. Fana. Hanna. That's my girl.

The silence is pervasive except for Dixie's cackle. She looks up and sees Joe standing in the bleachers.

DIXIE

Oh, there's the world's best
father. Take a bow, parent of the
century. How come you never came to
my softball games or PTAs ...
(accenting)
... Daaaada?

Two security men run to each side of her and escort her out of the gym.

DIXIE

You think taking car of Lana makes
up for never getting me a bike?

And after being escorted out, her voice could still be heard.

DIXIE (O.S.)

You were MIA in my entire life,
Daddy.

INT. JOE'S CAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

While Joe drives, both he and Lana are silent until--

JOE

You played a good game.

LANA

We lost. They were too big.

JOE

(pause)
Why do they make such a big deal in
basketball about height, anyway?

LANA

For the same reason strength is important in weight-lifting.

The elephant in the car is too hard for Joe to ignore.

JOE

Hey, listen, Lana. Someone must have bailed your mother out--

LANA

I don't want to hear it, Gramps.

JOE

So, how long are you going to--?

LANA

Just let me sit on the pity-pot for five minutes, if you don't mind.

JOE

There's nothing wrong with self-pity. It's an underrated emotion.

LANA

She's dead to me, Gramps. Leave me alone. Don't give me any of your platitudes, please. Just drive.

Joe drives. He doesn't say anything else.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - LANA'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Lana pretends to read in bed. There's a knock on the door.

JOE (O.S.)

May I come in?

LANA

Yes.

Joe cautiously enters.

LANA

Sorry for exploding in the car.

Joe nods. Accepts her apology.

LANA

You don't have to check up on me every two minutes. I'm a big girl.

JOE

Yes, you are.

Joe sits on the edge of her bed.

JOE

Do you know why I only have one picture of Nana in the living room?

Lana shakes her head.

JOE

Because whenever I look at her I feel guilty I wasn't the husband I should've been.

Through her sniffles--

LANA

Yeah. So?

Joe waits a beat.

JOE

That's it. Nothing else to say.

Lana thinks hard then reaches up and hugs Joe.

LANA

I'll get over this. Don't worry about me. I love you, Gramps.

JOE

Same here, Kiddo. Get a good night sleep.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL TRACK - DAY

A 17-year-old Lana runs with a few of other TEAMMATES who pace as one unit.

COACH

One more lap. Dig in. Dig in.

Although Lana finishes ahead of everyone else, her body and demeanor show all the signs of fatigue. She bends over, having a hard time catching her breath.

A SERIES OF JUMP CUTS shows Lana struggling through another practice in another day. Then another. And another. This continues until she's finally in shape. Then we JUMP OUT to--

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - LANA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

While Lana tries to sleep, muffled voices from downstairs are far from polite. She gets up and opens her door.

INT. HALLWAY - BY THE FRONT DOOR

Dixie and Joe are in the middle of a fight. Lana appears, unseen by Joe or Dixie, at the top of the stairs.

DIXIE

It's been over a year and the pawn shop owner couldn't identify the two guys and the store tape was erased. They dropped the charges on them, so they dropped them on me.

JOE

But you broke into the house and stole from me.

DIXIE

I did not. Those two guys heard me talking at the restaurant. They remembered me from high school. I might have mentioned about Mom's jewelry in the house. I'm sorry. I didn't know they were dickheads.

JOE

You're sorry, and that's supposed to make everything right?

DIXIE

I want to see Lana.

Joe scoffs.

DIXIE

I'm working. I'm trying to get better. I tried to make it to her practice, but I had an AA meeting.

JOE

Excuses. Lana's coach says every runner has one, but a champion never uses it. She's got a track meet at ten. Be there if you must.

Joe slams the door on her and turns to see Lana at the top of the stairs.

JOE

Sorry you had to hear that.

LANA

What's this, cycle number 22? She's been clean for a couple of minutes and is trying to get back into our good graces?

She heads back to her room.

INT./EXT. JOE'S CAR - MORNING

Joe pulls into the High School parking lot and parks. He and Lana look around. No Dixie.

They sit for a beat in silence. They see a boy and a girl sneak behind the bleachers which are on the dark side of the track. When the couple kiss, Joe eyes Lana with a query.

The couple get physically entangled and Joe growls. More moves from the couple produces more groans and an uneasy shift of posture from Joe. Lana giggles at his uneasiness.

LANA

Gramps. I'm not doing anything.

JOE

I never said you were. Did I?

After another round of sounds --

LANA

I got a track meet. Let's go.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL TRACK - PARKING LOT - DAY

They get out of the car and as they walk to the track--

JOE

I read in the paper about this
Goodman girl. That's the girl to
beat in the eight hundred, right?

LANA

Yes, she's quite good.

JOE

The article reminded me when I was
boxer in the Army. A pretty good
one, too.

LANA

You were a boxer? You?

JOE

Beat most everyone, including this
one guy who was a better boxer than
me. He should have won.

LANA

Why didn't he?

JOE

Whenever we clutched I told him a
little part of a story. I knew he
was allergic to bees so I told him
my father got stung by a wasp and
he scratched it until his leg got
infected.

A CLASSMATE approaches and--

CLASSMATE ONE

Good luck, Lana.

Lana waves to the Classmate.

LANA

So, what happened?

JOE

I told him the infection spread got
into his blood system. I didn't
tell him all at once, of course.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

It was over a few rounds. Whenever we clutched I give him a little more information.

They reach the track and another RUNNER waves her over.

LANA

I gotta go, Gramps.

JOE

Good luck, Sweetie.

She starts to go, but comes back.

LANA

OK. I'll bite. What happened next?

JOE

Well, during the eighth round I whispered my dad died that morning. He dropped his hands and said through his mouth piece, "Aagh". Then I clocked him as hard as I could. He went down for the count.

Lana sighs and leaves for the track. Joe yells to her--

JOE

But I beat him when he should have won. He lost focus. Stay focused.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL TRACK - CONTINUOUS

As Lana stretches, she notices Dixie pulling up in her beaten up old car. Lana can hear the door squeak open from where she is stretching. Dixie gets out and heads to the track.

IN THE STANDS

Joe watches Dixie waving exuberantly to Lana who just turns away giving her mother no acknowledgment.

ON LANA

As she stretches, she looks up and waves to Joe. He waves back with an 'over-the-shoulder' arm-pump.

COACH

OK, Lana. Let's go over strategy. The Goodman girl will be laying back for the first half of the race, so what are you going to do?

LANA

Take the lead early. Create enough distance between ourselves so she won't have enough in the tank to catch me.

COACH

That's right. She'll lose her advantage as a sprinter if you create a big enough lead. You got the stamina. And she has the speed. So, if she goes after you early, she'll burn herself out. She ran the last 400 in fifty flat when she won the State Championship last year. As a sophomore!

LANA

I know Coach.

ON JOE

As he watches the coach talk to Lana, Dixie approaches.

DIXIE

I got stuck in traffic.

JOE

It's Saturday. There is no traffic.

DIXIE

Dad, don't start.

ON THE TRACK

STARTER

Runners, take your marks.

Eight RUNNERS line up and take their marks. Goodman looks like she is a foot taller than everyone else.

GOODMAN

I wonder which one of you will be
second today?

The gun fires and the runners take off. Lana stumbles. As the race progress, she strains to hold third. Something's wrong with her ankle.

ON LANA'S COACH

COACH

Now. Now. Make your move. NOW!

ON LANA

She continues down the backstretch for the first time still in third place. She quickens her pace as Goodman holds her position in last. As they come down the stretch finishing the first lap, Goodman makes her move while Lana takes the lead.

COACH (O.S.)

It's too late.

(yelling)

It's too late?

They come past the stands and around the first turn with Lana and four other runners bunched as a group.

IN THE STANDS

Joe's cell phone rings. He answers it. Into the phone--

JOE

Steven, not now. Lana is in the
middle of running the 800.

STEVEN (V.O.)

Dad, did you read the papers?

JOE

No. Why?

STEVEN (V.O.)

Pulsar just signed a ten picture
deal with Disney. The stock hit the
roof. You're worth a few million.

Joe reacts as if he's out of breath, but he continues to watch the race.

ON LANA AND GOODMAN

Lana and four others, including Goodman, come out of the turn bunched together. Goodman inconspicuously elbows Lana which forces her to take a misstep which causes everyone to bump into everyone. One runner gets bumped off the track.

Even though Lana has a slight limp, she and Goodman lead the way virtually tied, and with a burst of speed Goodman passes Lana and wins the race.

ON LANA

She turns into the grass gasping for breaths. The coach runs over yelling--

COACH

Why did you wait so long?

Lana looks at her swollen ankle. She doesn't tell him her ankle got sprained. She just shakes her head and --

LANA

I guess I panicked in the heat of the moment. Sorry.

She looks up in the stands and can't find her grandfather. She sees chaos where her grandfather was sitting.

INT. HOSPITAL'S INTENSIVE CARE - NURSES DESK - DAY

Lana and Steven enter while Dixie signs papers at the desk. Lana's ankle is wrapped with an elastic tape.

STEVEN

What are you doing?

DIXIE

These are no-fault papers I'm signing. And by the way, Dad's going to need someone to make health-care decisions for him now. He's going to need long term care. You up for that?

Steven remains silent, then Lana nudges him.

STEVEN

I can't Lana. I'm never home, and I can't burden Liz with Dad.

LANA

Then I'll take custody of him.

DIXIE

You can't do that. You're under age.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Lana, Dixie and Steven sit at a desk headed by JUDGE SIMPSON.

JUDGE

You're a junior in high school, Lana. And even if your grandfather is incompetent to handle his own affairs, you can't take custody of anyone. Legally, you're a minor.

LANA

Then I'll get a full-time job.

JUDGE

That won't work, either.

LANA

I will find a way to get emancipated, and then I can file for guardianship.

JUDGE

(laughing)

It's not as simple as that, Lana.

LANA

But my mother doesn't care about my grandfather, Judge Simpson. Gramps just made a ton of money, and that is all my mother is after. Uncle Steven, tell him.

STEVEN

It's true, Judge. My father's portfolio went from a bit over a couple hundred thousand to two million in just a week, and my sister ... She's irresponsible.

DIXIE

I care about Dad as much as you do, Steven. I've been clean for awhile, Judge, and I--

STEVEN

How long have you been sober, three days now?

JUDGE

OK. Let's slow down here. Who's been making decisions in the past about his portfolio?

STEVEN

I make the recommendations and he usually follows them.

JUDGE

Are there any important decisions that need to be made in the next two weeks?

Steven shakes his head.

JUDGE

Good. Then your sister will have temporary custody.

LANA

All my mother wants is his money, Judge. If you give her authority over him now, she'll throw him into the cheapest home she can find, then deplete his account.

JUDGE

I'm sure your mother has her father's best interests at heart.

DIXIE

I do, Judge.

An AD-LIB conversation softens during the following VO.

PRESENT-DAY LANA (V.O.)

All of a sudden my mother was a concerned daughter. What a laugh.

(MORE)

PRESENT-DAY LANA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And I shouldn't've been angry at Steven because I knew he couldn't take care of Gramps, but I wanted things to be the way they were. I wanted my gramps back to the way he was. My life was crumbling right before my eyes.

JUDGE

Stop. I'm going to take this conservatorship and rule on it after I see the doctor's report. Ms. Gregory, you have temporary custody, and that's that.

The Judge gathers his papers.

JUDGE

Lana, it's summer soon. You're a teenager. Enjoy it. You'll stay with your mother until I rule on this. Nothing major needs to be decided now. Give me two weeks.

Lana shakes her head and won't stop shaking it.

JUDGE

Lana, if you don't stop this, I'll have to get family court involved. You don't want that, believe me.

LANA

All she wants is his money, Your Honor.

JUDGE

Lana, give me time to review the doctor's report and--

LANA

Fine.

Lana gets up to leave, but turns to the Judge.

LANA

Gramps is a unique kind of person. He's a man who says hello to sticks and trees and treats an ant with the same reverence as a bird.

(MORE)

LANA (CONT'D)

I learned early on that 'twinkle thinking' was a way of solving problems, and that 'Thing One' and 'Thing Two' were imaginary heros to call in time of need. I'm not being impertinent, Judge. I'm just letting you know I grew up with no role models except for an old man who saw life as a holy pilgrimage. If my mother gets her way, he will die in an institution, destitute. And I will do whatever I can to stop that from happening.

She exits from a silent room.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NEXT DAY

Dixie sits at Joe's roll-top desk looking over papers while Lana sits in a chair pretending to watch television.

DIXIE

Don't you have something else to do? Track practice or something?

Lana sees the Paris pamphlets on the desk. She gets up but Dixie grabs them before Lana can sneak them away.

LANA

They're just travel pamphlets.

DIXIE

He can't go to Paris. He can't go anywhere in his condition.

Lana notices "Nursing Home" brochures and points to them.

DIXIE

I'm going to take Gramps to one of them today to see if he likes it.

Lana growls her discontent and leaves in a huff.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY/JOE'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

As Lana walks by Joe's bedroom, she hears a noise. She enters and sees Joe laying on the floor with his wheelchair on its side. Lana struggles to get him up.

LANA

Shh. The Wicked Witch of the West
will hear us. How did you do this?

LIVING ROOM

A loud THUD distracts Dixie. She runs upstairs.

JOE'S BEDROOM

Dixie opens the door and sees Joe pretending to sleep in bed while Lana sits in a chair pretending to read.

DIXIE

I suppose ghosts are making all
that noise. Dad! I know you're
awake. We're visiting a home today.

Joe opens his eyes and grunts his discontent.

LATER

Dixie and Lana struggle to put a shirt on Joe. Lana purses her lips and makes a raspberry sound. Joe laughs.

JOE

Agheeing aghhida. Agheeing aghhida.

Joe laughs but it sounds more like a guttural fog horn.

DIXIE

Shut up! You both sound like
retards.

Undaunted by those remarks, they continue the task of getting Joe dressed. He can't get his arm in the shirt and he twists hard and falls to the floor. Dixie and Lana struggle to get him back in the wheelchair.

Lana notices Joe trying to hide his tears. She leans into him and whispers--

LANA

Don't worry. I have a plan.

EXT. NURSING HOME - LATER

Dixie leads Lana to *The Bellevue Assisted Living Home* while Lana pushes Joe in a wheelchair.

DIXIE

The outside is not so bad.

Joe mumbles his discontent.

DIXIE

This place has been approved by your long term insurance. So, quit whining. There's not many places...

LANA

He doesn't need to be put into a long term care place. I, excuse me, 'we', can take care of him at home.

DIXIE

Really. Are you going to sponge bathe him? I don't think so.

Lana wheels Joe up a ramp to the door. A male ATTENDANT, 20s, suit and tie, comes out to greet them and shows them in.

ATTENDANT

Hello. You must be the Gregory's.
Please, follow me.

BEGIN MONTAGE - A QUICK SHOWING OF THE FACILITY

-- The attendant shows them the dining room - a cafeteria-style place where several tables are crammed into a tiny seating area.

-- They enter a recreation room where four PEOPLE play cards at a table in the center of the room. A TV plays in front of a WOMAN who is asleep in a wheelchair.

-- They enter a living room where the window view is dreary.

-- The attendant leads them to a pint-sized bedroom: a bible sits on a night table, and a cardboard TV hangs on the wall for show purposes - and a narrow bed overwhelms a small room.

END MONTAGE

INT. NURSING HOME MEETING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They walk into a boring room; a couple of chairs and a couch.

ATTENDANT

Here you can visit Joe and talk with him privately.

LANA

Really? What happens if you have two families meeting here?

ATTENDANT

You just move the chairs to the corner here. The other family can move over there and you have your privacy that way. Or, of course, you could stay in the bedroom, but they'll be a bit cramped.

LANA

We could bring our lawn chairs.

Joe farts and Lana pumps her arm and--

LANA

The barking spider strikes again.

DIXIE

(To the Attendant.)

Thank you for showing us around. This is a perfect arrangement.

EXT. NURSING HOME - DAY - CONTINUOUS

As Lana wheels Joe down the walkway--

DIXIE

That was very embarrassing. And inappropriate. And disturbing.

LANA

Don't listen to her, Gramps. Not too many people can fart on demand. You have a great talent there. I think I'll take you on the road.

DIXIE

Like it or not, this is the place where you'll be staying, Father. And then you can fart all you want.

Lana and Joe look at each other despondently.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - LANA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lana has a French doctor's site up on the computer screen.

She reads the headline: NEW BREAKTHROUGH FOR STROKE VICTIMS.
She scribbles some notes on a paper.

INT. JOE'S KITCHEN - A WEEK LATER - MORNING

Joe sits at the breakfast table reading a newspaper, and Lana hums a tune while making scrambled eggs.

JOE

Ug!

Lana puts two pieces of bread in the toaster, then pours a cup of coffee. She tosses a straw in the cup and places it in front of Joe. He sucks on the straw then nods. Lana turns the newspaper page and Joe continues reading.

Lana then returns to the stove and continues making the eggs. Dixie enters just as the toast pops up. Lana butters the toast and gives it to Joe. He nods, she turns another page.

DIXIE

How did you know he wanted toast?

LANA

He has toast every morning. 'UG' means mug. That's coffee. When he pronounces 'CH', that means cherries. Scrambled eggs is ...

DIXIE

OK. Ok. Never mind. Forget I asked.

Lana places the scrambled eggs on a plate and puts it in front of Joe with a fork.

DIXIE

And how is he going to eat that?

Joe tries to eat it with his right hand. He's successful at first, but he eventually needs help from Lana. As Dixie leaves --

DIXIE

Just to remind you, we have a meeting with the Judge next week.

INT. AIRPORT TICKET COUNTER- DAY

The attendant hands Lana two tickets.

ATTENDANT

Have a nice trip. Gate Seven has a wheelchair accessible ramp. You'll be the first to be called.

LANA

Thank you.

Lana walks over to Joe and starts their trek to Gate 7. Joe taps on the arm of his wheelchair and mumbles something.

LANA

My college fund, Gramps.

Joe taps on the wheelchair and mumbles again. Lana stops wheeling and kneels down next to Joe who's holding a carry-on tightly.

LANA

I told you. We have a few grand for the hotel and food and enough for a boat ride to dump Nana's ashes. We're set. Don't worry about money. Your dream of going to Paris is more important than money.

Tearfully, Joe struggles to say--

JOE

Ov oo. Ov oo.

LANA

Wow! I don't believe it. I guess there's a first time for everything. I love you too, Gramps.

She continues to wheel him when he mumbles something else.

LANA

Don't worry. The hotel management promised to send a nurse.

JOE

Oood. Oood. Oood.

As Lana takes Joe through the airport--

PRESENT-DAY LANA (V.O.)
Gramps thought I was only taking
him to dump Nana's ashes in the
Seine. But he would soon find out
differently.

INT. AIRPLANE - LATER

Joe looks out the window as the plane takes off.

INT. PARIS AIRPORT -- EARLY EVENING

Both Lana and Joe marvel at the sights while an ATTENDANT helps them negotiate the airport.

INT./EXT. CAB RIDE TO HOTEL - NIGHT

They look out the window at the awe-inspiring Eiffel Tower.

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Lana enjoys the view of Paris through the window. She hears the toilet FLUSH then a CRASH. She rushes to the bathroom.

HOTEL BATHROOM

The HEALTH CARE WORKER tries to pick Joe up from the floor. Lana steps in and helps him put Joe back in the wheelchair.

HEALTH CARE WORKER
I lost control of him.

LANA
His left side has no strength.

HEALTH CARE WORKER
Sorry. I'll be more careful.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

The Health Care Worker helps Lana finish dressing Joe.

EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Lana wheels Joe out of the hotel, turns the corner and continues down the street.

EXT. PARIS BOOK STORE - NIGHT

Lana stops at a book storefront and looks through the window. Joe taps on the arm of his wheelchair and they go in.

INT. PARIS BOOK STORE - CONTINUOUS

Lana inspects the store, then steps in front of Joe, spreads her arms and slowly rotates.

LANA

The store is all yours.

QUICK FLASHES -- of Lana as a child dashing through the children's section, pushing buttons on as many books as she can, summoning music, Elmo's voice doing the alphabet song, and the SOUND that she so passionately embraces. We back out of the flashes and transition to--

INT. JUDGE'S OFFICE - BACK IN THE UNITED STATES

Dixie, Steven and Judge Simpson sit in his chambers.

JUDGE

So, you helped her take Joe to Paris?

STEVEN

I helped her get the money from her college fund. She thought once Dixie became guardian, he'd never get a chance to go.

DIXIE

Oh, please. Judge, the doctor's report says my father can't care for himself. End of story.

JUDGE

I know, Ms. Gregory. Please don't make this any more difficult than it is.

(To Steven)

That was not a good thing to do, Mr. Gregory. You're actually in contempt, and I have a mind to charge you, but considering everything ...

(MORE)

JUDGE (CONT'D)

I don't like making a ruling
without seeing your father face-to-
face, but I have no choice, really.
Temporary custody is extended.

The Judge signs the papers. He keeps a copy, and hands a copy
over to Dixie.

JUDGE

(to Steven)

And tell your father and Lana I
want to see them when they come
back from Paris. First thing.

EXT. ENTRANCE LA MARINA DE PARIS (BOAT) - DAY

A BOAT ATTENDANT escorts Lana and Joe to a table. The carry-
on bag is strapped to Joe's chair. He mumbles something. Lana
takes money from her purse and hands it to the attendant.

BOAT ATTENDANT

Merci beaucoup.

LATER ON THE BOAT

Lana feeds Joe his last bite then sits back to enjoy the
sights. Joe nods to the bag and Lana carefully removes the
urn. Joe nods again and Lana slowly dumps the ashes out.

ON JOE

Tearful, but happy.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Lana wheels Joe in, parks him to the side, and heads right to
the RECEPTIONIST, 30s, professionally dressed.

PRESENT-DAY LANA

I didn't tell the doctor we were
coming because I didn't have the
twenty grand to pay him. I was
hoping he'd see us anyway.

LANA

Do you speak English?

RECEPTIONIST

Yes. What can I do for you?

LANA

I brought my grandfather from America. He had a stroke and I was hoping Doctor Duryea would--

RECEPTIONIST

Do you have an appointment?

LANA

No, and I don't have any money either. But I was hoping--

The receptionist laughs, holds out her hand like a traffic cop and gets up. After a brief moment she comes back with DOCTOR DURYEA who speaks with a French accent.

DOCTOR DURYEA

You phoned me. You're the American?

LANA

Yes. And we talked briefly about a payment ... I mean, it said on your website that you give people who can't afford treatment special--

DOCTOR DURYEA

But you had money to travel, no?

LANA

Yes, that was from my college fund.

DOCTOR DURYEA

I see. An MRI is very expensive.

LANA

I know. I brought his old MRI and his Doctor's report with me here. And if you can make him better, he will have access to his estate and--

The doctor holds up his hand for silence, then takes a long look at Joe, then back to Lana. After a beat he whispers something to a NURSE as she passes nearby.

DOCTOR DURYEA

Please follow the nurse.

INT. MRI ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The nurse leads them into a room with a large MRI machine.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - LATER

The doctor examines the MRI scan on his computer while Lana and Joe patiently wait for his review. Finally, he turns and--

DOCTOR DURYEA

When he first had his stroke, was he disoriented? Trouble speaking?

LANA

Yes.

He examines Joe's eyes, then points to a chart on the wall.

DOCTOR DURYEA

Can you read the third line?

ON THE CHART

The third line reads "A-O-E".

BACK TO JOE AND THE DOCTOR

Joe mumbles something, an actual effort to recite the line, but a far cry from what the third line is.

DOCTOR DURYEA

Show me your teeth.

Joe cracks the corner of his mouth, a botched attempt to smile. The doctor sits back. Grim.

LANA

You can talk in front of Joe. He wants to hear what you have to say.

DOCTOR DURYEA

Your grandfather had a hemorrhagic stroke. Statistics show 10% of stroke victims recover completely. Another 25 have minor impairments. And 10% of stroke victims require a nursing home or a long-term care facility. Hard to tell from the scan alone, but with his immobility and speech patterns, it seems he falls in the last group.

LANA

But your methods? People completely recovered doing your exercises.

DOCTOR DURYEA

Yes, robust as they are, but they work on patients whose brain damage is less severe than Mr. Gregory's.

LANA

But you said it's hard to tell and I've heard him speak. And he can move his hand. Gramps show him. Move your hand.

Joe tries to move his right hand. He taps the wheelchair.

DOCTOR DURYEA

That's normal, Ms. Gregory. And you heard him try to read the chart. I am sorry. There's nothing I can do. You've come a long way for nothing.

Lana starts to sob.

DOCTOR DURYEA

Miss Gregory, be thankful he's alive. Fifteen percent die shortly after the stroke. He's a survivor.

Lana nods and walks behind Joe and starts to wheel him out. She opens the door and just as they leave--

JOE

(fast)

Yeayo. Yeayo. Yeayo.

After they exit, the doctor sighs and turns to his desk and writes his report. Joe slows down his recitation of--

JOE (O.S.)

Aa ... oh ... ee. Aa ... oh ... ee.

Hearing this, the doctor looks at the visual chart he had Joe try to read a few minutes before.

ON THE CHART

The third line reads "A-O-E".

JOE (O.S.)

Aa ... oh ... ee.

BACK TO THE DOCTOR

His face conveys hope.

INT. DOCTOR'S HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Lana, still sobbing, wheels Joe down the hall. The door behind her flies open, and Lana turns and faces the doctor.

DOCTOR DURYEA

WAIT! Mr. Gregory, say that again.

Joe incoherently reels off a string of syllables. Nonsense syllables. Then Lana puts her hand on his shoulder and--

LANA

Gramps. Slow down. Take your time.

Joe wets his lips, then proceeds much slower.

JOE

Aa ... oh ... ee.

The Doctor beams a smile to a wide-eyed Lana who claps and celebrates. Giddy.

DOCTOR DURYEA

OK. OK. I can't promise anything, but here's the deal. I'll waive my fee, but you have to come here twice a day for six weeks and pay my therapist \$1000. Can you afford to do that, and the hotel fees?

LANA

My Uncle can wire me the rest of my college fund. We can do it. Yes.

DOCTOR DURYEA

You miss one session and you're out. Yes?

LANA

Yes. Yes. Yes.

INT. AIRPORT RECEPTION AREA -- WEEKS LATER

Two law OFFICERS wait in the reception area watching PASSENGERS deplane. Lana emerges from the tunnel pushing Joe in a wheelchair. One officer points his finger at her.

INT. JUDGE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The Judge, Dixie and Steven sit at the table in the Judge's chambers. Silence prevails. The Judge looks at his watch.

STEVEN

It's one of the most ridiculous things I've ever heard. You pressed charges for kidnapping? That's low, even for you, Dixie.

DIXIE

It's been over six weeks. Give me a break.

STEVEN

You know they went to Paris to scatter Mom's ashes.

DIXIE

That takes two days.

STEVEN

And they went to see a doctor for his condition, Your Honor. And Lana says Dad's much better. He's...

JUDGE

Don't worry, Mr. Gregory. I told the DA to bring them here before charging her. I was going to make a decision of what to do then, but--

He looks at his watch again.

DIXIE

What difference does it make? You already signed the papers, Judge.

JUDGE

If your father's not incapacitated any longer, your temporary custody will be voided.

The Judge stands and gathers his papers.

JUDGE

However, I can't hold this session
any longer--

The Judge is interrupted by Lana entrance. Then, right behind her a shadow lingers, then Joe appears with the help of a walking cane.

STEVEN

Your Honor, wait a moment.

JOE

(with labored speech)

Hello, Steven. How are you, Your Honor? I know Dixie will owe a lot of money for court costs after all this is over, so let me help.

He walks over to Dixie and hands her a check.

SUPER - A CHECK IS MADE OUT TO DIXIE GREGORY FOR \$300,000

BACK TO SCENE

As `Joe passes Dixie, he leans in and whispers--

JOE

Now you can buy that bike I never got you.

SUPER: "END OF FLASHBACK"

EXT. TRACK MEET - PRESENT DAY

Sean turns off his tape recorder and is quiet for a few beats. Then--

LANA

After that dramatic appearance from Gramps at the Judge's chambers, things improved right away with my mother and I. We went out to a restaurant that same night and she confessed to me she always blamed Gramps for her addiction when it was her bad choices that led her astray.

SEAN

Thanks. That was quite a tale.
Listen, I haven't got much time. I
gotta go. Got to put this together.

LANA

What about the favor you promised?

SEAN

Oh, that's right. What do you want
me to do?

LANA

The Gazette did a piece on the
track coach at State recently,
right?

SEAN

On Coach Petzinger. He violated a
recruiting rule. Got his hand
slapped. A minor infraction. Why?

LANA

Well, here's what I want you to do.
Take your Gazette Press badge and
pin it closer to your shoulder so
it can be seen. Then--

ON GOODMAN

She warms up doing stretches. She looks up and sees Lana
talking to Sean. The MUTED conversation has her interest.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Five minutes for the eight hundred.

BACK TO LANA AND SEAN

SEAN

Okay, got it.

While Lana is exercising she looks up and sees Joe and
Steven. Joe gives her the 'over-the-shoulder' arm-pump. She
waves, then continues stretching. Her coach approaches.

LANA

Goodman accepted a scholarship to
State already, right, Coach?

COACH

Yeah, why?

LANA

Ah, nothing. Just wondering.

COACH

Now listen. Stay focused. This is your senior year, Lana. Your last shot. What are you going to do differently this year, hmm?

LANA

I'll lay in third to see who the rabbits are, then make my move at the hundred and run like hell.

COACH

And why are we doing that?

LANA

Because she always lays back for the first quarter and if I create enough of a distance her late kick can't make up the difference.

The coach goes to say something--

LANA

I got it, Coach. I got it.

AT THE STARTING LINE

Lana approaches the line.

STARTER

Call for the eight hundred.

Eight RUNNERS line up for the 800 meters. Goodman - still a foot taller than Lana - stands next to her.

EXT. TRACK PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Dixie pulls up in her car, opens the squeaky door and gets out. She walks up to the edge of the stands and watches.

BACK TO THE STARTING LINE.

STARTER
Runners, step up.

As they step up, Goodman positions herself next to Lana and hovers over her before taking the running position.

LANA
Hey, Goodman. No elbows today, huh?

Goodman looks at Lana as if she has two heads. She looks at the other runners--

GOODMAN
I wonder which one of you will be second today.

As Lana sets herself up on the line.

LANA
You.

GOODMAN
You wish. Not on your best day.

LANA
We'll see. Oh, by the way, congratulations on your scholarship to State.

Goodman grunts. Sean comes over sporting his Gazette badge.

SEAN
Lana. I can't have that news leaked before we print it, so mums the word on Coach Petzinger from State. Okay? Promise?

Lana zippers her lip. Goodman looks hard at Lana.

LANA
(To Goodman)
Too bad about Coach Petzinger, huh?

STARTER
Runners, take your marks.

Lana shakes her head and forces a frown.

LANA

There was much more to his gift
giving than was reported.

STARTER

Set!

Goodman goes to say something, but the gun fires. The runners
take off. Lana retreats to last position next to Goodman.

LANA

State can't compete in NCAA Track
and Field because the recruiting
violations.

ON LANA'S COACH

COACH

What the hell are you doing?

BACK ON GOODMAN AND LANA

Lana quickens her pace before the hundred pole. Goodman
hesitates, but follows. They both settle close to the lead.

LANA

Shame. All the colleges are doing
it. Too bad he got caught.

GOODMAN

What are you talking about? Where
did you read that?

Lana quickens the pace, lunges to the lead. Goodman follows.

LANA

The Gazette's going to publish the
story in tomorrow's paper. No track
program for four years. That's
gotta be tough.

Lana quickens the pace leaving Goodman a few lengths behind.
Goodman must hustle to keep up with her. The pace is quick.

GOODMAN

I didn't hear anything about that.

IN THE STANDS

Joe sees Lana talking to Goodman and smiles. He gets up and walks down to the fence at ground level. On his way --

JOE
That's my girl.

ON LANA AND GOODMAN

Coming around the stretch for the first time, Lana quickens the pace again and Goodman stays with her. As Goodman nestles next to Lana--

GOODMAN
You saying I have no scholarship?

LANA
Let's end this chit-chat now. Hope you got enough gas in the tank.

Lana quickens the pace. Goodman's face tells all - the sudden realization she was just duped.

ON JOE

He watches Lana and Goodman battle for the lead at the top of the stretch. Goodman inches ahead of Lana.

ON THE COACH

Lana's coach is wide-eyed and smiling.

COACH
Well I'll be ...

ON LANA AND GOODMAN

As they come down the stretch Lana and Goodman are even. They match each other's stride.

ON JOE

He extends his cell phone and pumps out the SOUND Lana so passionately loves. That's just what she needs as she proves she's the best this day.

ON LANA

She wins in a tight finish.

ON DIXIE

She watches with a tinge of pride.

DIXIE
(whispering to herself)
Yeah. That's my girl.

She reaches into her pocket, pulls out a large six-month AA coin, kisses it, and puts the coin back into her pocket.

A shadow appears over her. Dixie turns and sees it's Bill, Lana's father in an Army uniform

BILL
How long have you been clean?

DIXIE
Not long. Six months.

BILL
It's a start.

BACK TO LANA

While she heaves her breaths to the ground, Lana doesn't seem to know people are back-slapping her, congratulating her.

She looks up to Joe who's arm-pumping like crazy.

LANA
I don't believe it. It works. It actually works, you crazy coot.

As the ambient SOUNDS fade, she takes a moment to reflect.

LANA (V.O.)
You sure have a strange way of teaching, Gramps. It was crazy fun crunching Cheerios on the floor. How else would I have learned the value of cleaning up after myself? And lying may be wrong, right? Unless it has tactical benefits, like during war or at track meets.
(MORE)

LANA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And farting? Ooo. That's a good
one, Gramps. There's certainly
humor in it, even now.

Lana makes a raspberry sound and laughs.

Her eyes meet her grandfather's. They share a smile and--

LANA (V.O.)
Don't worry, Gramps. You're my
teacher, and if there's one lesson
you've taught me to hand down to my
children it's this: *don't grow up -
it's a trap.*

FADE OUT:

THE END