

MY MOTHER HAS AGORAPHOBIA

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FADE IN:

INT. FRONT DOOR OF A HOME SOMEWHERE IN BROOKLYN - MORNING

DEBBIE HAMMEL pushing middle age and wearing PJs and a blindfold on top of her head, appears at the door of her home. She opens the door and the outside appears.

EXT. FRONT LAWN OF DEBBIE'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The summer morning bustles with wake-up noises of a typical Brooklyn, NY residential neighborhood. The sights and sounds are amplified (SPFX) in Debbie's eyes. She has agoraphobia.

Birds, hidden in trees planted a long time ago, chirp away. A siren echoes from a few blocks away. A mother's voice yells in the distance. A breeze marches through the street and the sun's rays ricochet off parked cars, like lasers beams.

A car passes by, a little fast in a residential area with children. A sparrow flies onto a lawn for an early-bird special. A white butterfly flies by and briefly gives chase to a cone-like feather floating like a parachute.

Debbie hides behind the front door after hearing a baby crying a few doors down. She closes the door at the sound of the car revving it's engine at the adjacent corner, but leaves it opened enough for her to peek out and see what's going on.

INT. DEBBIE'S FOYER AREA - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Debbie leans against the front door.

DEBBIE

How old am I. Let me see. My last birthday was my 13th anniversary of my 39th birthday. No, no. Pat says I shouldn't say that. It sounds stupid. I'm 52 years old. That's how old I am, and that's what I should say. Not the other thing. But I like it. It's funny. Ug. I shouldn't be dealing with this... 'condition' at this age.

She looks out on her front lawn where a A Hammel's Happy Beauty Parlor sign dominates the scenery. The sign's subtitle says *It's where people go to curl up and dye.*

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
 (whispering to herself)
 Okay. You can do this...

EXT. DEBBIE'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY - CONTINUOUS

She carefully steps out of the house and down the steps while looking directly in front of her like a robot. Then she hears an engine noise.

DEBBIE
 It has to be a car.

She moves forward in spite of the noise she hears.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
 You're goin a little bit fast,
 don't you think?

A car speeds by and she almost falls off the porch.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
 I see Ralph down the street. I
 guess I won't get the paper. I am
 going to get the mail instead.
 Thirty steps up and 30 steps back.
 You can do it.

A parked car close by shoots a blinding ray from the sun at her, and she must balance herself as she steps off the porch.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
 Dear God, why must I live this way?

Debbie shivers a bit, then cautiously steps forward.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
 One ... two.

She stops because she hears another car turning onto the street, and the sound (SPFX) of the engine becomes louder and louder and whizzes by her like a streaking Batmobile. The sight of the passing car causes Debbie's vision to warp.

She looks skyward, and holds out her arms like a gymnast trying to balance herself. It is not working so she hustles back to the porch and braces herself on the steps.

Slowly, she takes deep breaths. In. Out. In. Out.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Okay. You can do this.

(SPFX) She pulls the blindfold over her eyes prompted by the sound of another car engine. A horn sounds and streaks of light permeate her space. Sights and sounds morph into each other producing greater flashes and louder noises.

(SPFX) The blinding flashes spill atomic images, a kaleidoscope of colorful explosions that make little sense. She is in agony and falls, but the noise fades away as the car moves in the opposite direction.

Just then, Ralph, the mailman, appears.

RALPH

Good morning, Mrs. Hammel. Do you need help?

DEBBIE

Morning, Ralph. I was trying to go to the deli to get the paper. There is an article about my daughter in it. I saw you and thought that maybe I should get the mail first. What do you have for me today?

RALPH

Well, let's go see. I put it in the mailbox already.

Ralph helps Debbie up and they proceed together.

DEBBIE

Don't step on the cracks.

RALPH

I know. You'll break your mother's back. Don't need to remind me.

DEBBIE

Mrs. Aldrich isn't looking, is she?

Ralph looks up and sees Mrs. Aldrich staring at them out of her living room window, but he pretends not to see her.

RALPH

No. Not today, Mrs. Hammel

They approach a large crack in their path.

RALPH (CONT'D)

On the count of three. Ready. One.
Two. Threeeeeee.

They hop over the crack and continue on their slow trek to the mailbox. Once there, Ralph retrieves the mail and--

RALPH (CONT'D)

Okay. Let's see what we got? Bills,
Bills and more bills. Don't need
them. Oh, look at this. Overnight
delivery from Wendy.

DEBBIE

Would you open it for me, Ralph?

Ralph opens the envelope and unfolds the one-page letter. A photo falls out and he picks it up. He's surprised at the photo of Wendy wearing a Yankee hat.

RALPH

She looks good. Lives dangerously,
I see. A Yankee hat in Boston.

DEBBIE

Would you read the letter to me,
please, Ralph?

He hands the photo to Debbie and--

RALPH

(reading)

Hi, Mom. The three tickets I'm
holding in my hand in the photo are
for a Boston Philharmonic concert
this Friday night at Carnegie Hall.
I'm coming home Thursday to deliver
them personally so you and two
others can go to the Carnegie
concert for free.

(MORE)

RALPH (CONT'D)

You can see me play my cello solo which, by the way, is mentioned in a personal interview I had with the Brooklyn Tribune, which should run in Thursday's paper. Don't be too upset with me for not calling or writing earlier. I know we have not spoken in a while, but maybe now is time to discuss the reason why I haven't been more open. Talking this weekend is better than not talking at all, right? Love-Wendy.

DEBBIE

Yes. I heard about that in the local news report on TV, and I was going to get the paper at the local deli down the street to read the interview, but... but...

RALPH

That's wonderful news, isn't it?

DEBBIE

Yeah. Absolutely.

RALPH

Are you ready to go back?

DEBBIE

I'm okay, Ralph. I'll see you, tomorrow. Same time, same place.

Debbie waited for Ralph to leave then she put the photo in her pocket and grabbed the mailbox for support.

Then Debbie heard a noise. It wasn't a car, or a truck. The noise was distinguishable. Ah, yes. The tiny, distant roar of a jet plane hovering thirty thousand feet above her.

The sound gets louder as the plane is overhead. She looks up and sees the winged speck flying across the sky high above her. The plane becomes larger and larger until it looks like an alien ship hovering over her. (SPFX)

She finds her bearings and bolts to the porch while mumbling-

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
Hurry. It's coming. AAAAGH!!!

Debbie goes inside the house and slams the door as if a mugger was chasing her.

INT. DEBBIE'S HOSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

She leans against the door and takes rapid breaths.

DEBBIE
This not real. This is not real.
(holds her heart)
Calm your raucous heart.
(holds her head)
Oh, and those infernal thumping
noises in my ear.

Debbie commences with breathing maneuvers and--

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
This is not real, this is not real,
this is not real ...
(singing)
Zip-a-dee do dah, zip-a-dee yea ...

INT. DEBBIE'S BEAUTY PARTOR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Calmer now, Debbie slowly sits down at her desk, and reaches in the drawer for her portable tape player. She turns it on.

TAPE PLAYER (V.O.)
*The deep breathing exercises I
taught you in Tape O ne will help
counteract irrational thoughts that
sometimes provoke feelings of panic
and helplessness...*

Debbie rises and lets out with a humongous puff of air, and goes upstairs. She leaves the letter on top of the desk.

BEAUTY PARLOR - LATER

Debbie comes downstairs looking much better than she did before. She bangs the side of her head with her hand.xx

DEBBIE

Damn thumping noises. Stop.

She continues with a series of breathing maneuvers which quickly transform into--

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

(singing)

Zip-a-dee do dah, zip-a-dee yea ...

She reviews the mail more closely while walking into the kitchen, still talking to herself.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

There will be no more complaining.
I will not give power to my ... my ...
my condition.

(singing)

My oh my, what a wonderful day.

*Plenty of sunshine, plenty of ... of
... I don't know the words to a won-
der-full song.*

(ding-dong) The doorbell rings.

INT. VESTIBULE AREA - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Debbie opens the door and is greeted by an elderly lady.

MRS. BAUER

Hi, I'm Claudette Bauer.

DEBBIE

You're two minutes early.

MRS. BAUER

I...I...I

DEBBIE

I'm just joking. Kate and Pat
warned me about doing jokes,
especially to new customers.

(as Mrs. Bauer walks in)

(MORE)

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

They tell me that my jokes may be funny to me, if only abstractly, but they are not funny to new customers like you. Here's one: A man goes into the diner with a horse and they sit down in a booth. A waitress comes over and says, 'Hey. What's with the long face?'

Debbie laughs but Mrs. Bauer doesn't.

MRS. BAUER

Glad you're not a stand-up comic.

DEBBIE

(closes the front door)

Right this way. Pat, who works here, says I tell jokes like reading from a ketchup bottle. And I let my OCD get the better of me, sometimes. She has invented a code word, 'stinkbug', that is supposed to stop me from telling jokes, or lining things up into perfect circles or straight lines.

Debbie directs her new customer into the beauty parlor.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

This was a living room at one time. We converted it into the beauty parlor.

(pause)

So, what brings you here?

MRS. BAUER

I just moved to Brooklyn and my neighbor, Mrs. Mondale, said she knew you very well and told me to get a wash and styling. Then, if I like it, later on I can get it cut.

DEBBIE

Well, I think you came to the right place. Step right up.

INT. DEBBIE'S BEAUTY PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

They step into the parlor and Mrs. Bauer stops to inspect.

MRS. BAUER

Wow. Two industrial chairs and overhead dryers. A deep sink. You even have a small frig, a toaster and coffee maker. I'm impressed.

Mrs. Bauer looks at the photographs of Debbie's daughter and late husband. A large picture of Wendy playing the cello is centered on one wall. A smaller picture of Debbie and her late husband, Harry, fills in another wall.

DEBBIE

(pointing)

That's my daughter. That one over there is my late husband.

MRS. BAUER

Mrs. Mondale told me I was in for a treat. I didn't realize you were set up so professionally. This looks so much like a real beauty parlor, yet it's so homey.

Mrs. Bauer points to a plaque on the wall by the door which states, *BEAUTY PARLOR: A place where women curl up and dye--*

MRS. BAUER (CONT'D)

Now that is funny. That's what you say on the sign outside, right?

DEBBIE

Yes. We try and keep the humor flowing around here. Please, take a seat. Make yourself comfortable.

Mrs. Bauer inspects the photos on the wall. Her gaze stops at one in particular.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

That one is Wendy, my daughter. She plays the cello for the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra now.

(MORE)

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Wendy got eight scholarships to college. She accepted the one to Cambridge.

Mrs. Bauer touches a picture as if it was sacred.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

My base of customers is almost exclusively women forty or older. Once the customers get to know me, they come regularly for a wash and set. Sometimes they come in for a perm, on special occasions, like graduations or weddings. Word of mouth is the only advertising I do, except for the sign outside. My prices are cheaper than any commercial beauty parlor.

MRS. BAUER

When did your husband die?

DEBBIE

Oh, a long time ago. He died when Wendy was a young girl who aspired to be a musician.

MRS. BAUER

(pointing)

Who's that?

DEBBIE

The mud wrestling picture. Oh, that's Pat. She lives next door with her son, Trevor, and works here as well. She's great. And my other stylist, Kate, just started working here a couple of weeks ago. They're shopping for me now.

Just then, Trevor appears.

TREVOR

Is my mother here?

DEBBIE

No. This is shopping day. She went out shopping.

TREVOR

Oh, I'll come back later then.
Gotta go. Gotta baby sit the oven.

And with that he leaves.

Debbie starts doing Mrs. Bauer's hair.

DEBBIE

And that was Trevor, Pat's son.

Debbie secretly removes strands of hair from the comb and tosses them into the garbage behind her.

She grabs a bottle of hair conditioner.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Use this conditioner when you wash
your hair. It's good for the scalp.

EXT. ON THE STREET WHERE DEBBIE LIVES - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Meanwhile, PAT O'NEILL turns her car onto Main Street from one end while KATE DEVINE turns her car onto the same street at the other end. The two vehicles travel towards each other, like jousters ready to do battle.

INTERJECT BETWEEN PAT AND KATHLEEN

Pat appears tall while sitting down. She is thin, graying, an imposing figure, even for her age. She focuses her attention on Kate's car which is coming at her. She squirms in her seat, getting ready for a head-on collision.

PAT

Okay, you little pipsqueak, get
ready to meet your Maker.

KATE, hefty across the beam, appears scared.

KATE

This is the day I'm going to die, I
just know it. Dorothy - I'm gonna
see you soon. Oh, gad zooks, as my
mother would say.

Kate squirms in her seat as she proceeds to Debbie's house.

Kate eases her foot off the accelerator and taps her brakes a few times. She allows the car to roll on its own momentum.

KATE (CONT'D)

She won't hit me.

She says this more as a prayer than a proclamation.

While Pat gathers more speed--

PAT

Okay, you little wimp, let's see if this makes you piss in your pants.

Kate looks frightened while she watches Pat's car head right at her.

KATE

What are you doing, Pat?

Kate closes her eyes and gets ready for the worst.

As they approaches Debbie's house, Kate slams on her breaks while screaming incoherently. Her car stalls and comes to a stop right in front of Debbie's house.

Kate blesses herself quickly and hangs onto the steering wheel, bracing herself for the shock of a head-on collision. However, Pat pulls into Debbie's driveway, missing Kate altogether and Mrs. Bauer's car by inches.

Kate starts the car and pulls in behind Pat and they both get out of their respective cars.

BACK TO SCENE

While they retrieve their respective items and proceed to Debbie's house--

KATE (CONT'D)

You're a crazy lunatic.

PAT

That's redundant. A lunatic is always crazy. You never met a reasonable lunatic, have you?

KATE

You're crazy driving like that.

PAT

And you're a wimp. We had a race
and you lost. Deal with it.

KATE

(looking skyward)

Dear Dorothy. Help me.

(to Pat)

I wasn't racing. You were racing.
And why in-the-Dickens did you park
in Debbie's driveway when you live
right next door?

PAT

Why, indeed. Why does anyone do
anything in the sick, crazy world?

(pointing)

You recognize this car?

While Kate retrieves bags of groceries from her car--

KATE

Must be that new customer Debbie
was anticipating this morning.

INT. DEBBIE'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

As they enter into Debbie's house, each one eyes the other,
avoiding physical contact, like two wrestlers circling each
other, and each cautious in making the first move. Pat opens
the door and extends her arm.

PAT

Age before beauty.

They entered the house, and as Kate heads for the kitchen--

KATE

You scared the Dickens out of me. I
started today in a very good mood.

As Pat heads to the beauty parlor--

PAT

Hey. Some days you're the bug; some days you're the windshield.

INT. DEBBIE'S KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Kate plops the grocery bag on the counter.

KATE

I don't know why she has to be such a ... bossy witch.

As she puts the Twinkies away, she opens the box then takes one back and stares at it as if it were talking to her. Kate puts it back in the box and stares at it. She takes it out again. This time she smells it. The Twinkie is goading her. Tempting. She stuffs it in her pocket.

INT. DEBBIE'S PARLOR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Debbie works on Mrs. Bauer's hair as Pat walks in and puts away the beauty supplies. Mrs. Bauer doesn't seem to be paying attention to the idle chatter between Debbie and Pat. Instead she is looking at the photos on the wall.

Improvise: Mrs. Bauer was saying things like 'really' and 'no fooling' to Debbie's and Pat's while they prattle (improvise) about the rush hour traffic and the weather.

DEBBIE

By the way, Trevor came a few minutes ago. Shouldn't he be teaching.

PAT

Ah, he took off. He's going to see the Army recruiter today, the jerk.

Just then, Kate walks in stands in front of everyone as if she has something important to say, but is being coy about it. Debbie eyes Kate for a few seconds, then--

DEBBIE

Okay, I'll bite. You look like you swallowed the canary. What's up?

KATE

I met a man last night.

PAT

At Bingo.

The tone of sarcasm is unmistakable.

KATE

He's very charming. And he's a nice dresser.

PAT

You said he was a good dancer.

KATE

He is. He's also a nice dresser.

As Kate and Pat banter, Mrs. Bauer leans into Debbie and whispers--

MRS. BAUER

Who are they?

DEBBIE

Friends of mine who work here.

MRS. BAUER

I was told that you put on a show while you do your customer's hair.

DEBBIE

In God's name, who told you that?

MRS. BAUER

Mrs. Mondale told me that you put on a little skit once in awhile. Is this a show now?

DEBBIE

(laughing)

Hey, you two. This is Mrs. Bauer.
(leans into Mrs. Bauer)
The skinny one over there is Pat,
and the buxom lady is Kate.

MRS. BAUER

Are they professional actors?

DEBBIE

Sometimes I think so.

Pat puts the last of the supplies away and sits down on the couch, eyeing Mrs. Bauer.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

(to Pat)

Mrs. Bauer thinks we put on a show while she gets her hair done.

PAT

Who told you that?

MRS. BAUER

Mrs. Mondale.

PAT

Elaine Mondale, the news reporter?

MRS. BAUER

She's my neighbor. She said that you ladies put on a show while ...

PAT

You don't have to repeat the entire sentence.

DEBBIE

Mrs. Mondale had interviewed Pat several times while she got her hair done.

(pointing to an article)

In fact, she wrote that Newsday article hanging on the wall. See... the headlines, 'The Oldest Woman in Brooklyn Skydiving Club Tells All.'

PAT

That pipsqueak. One interview with me and she thinks she knows me. Her last interview was with Zack Ryder and all they talked about was a tag team he was on when he wrestled against The Road Warriors.

Debbie leans in and whispers--

DEBBIE

She's only acting. It's all part of the show.

Pat rolls her eyes and hands Debbie a receipt for the items she just brought in. She leans in to Debbie and--

PAT

Bite me.

She raises her hand to Mrs. Bauer and--

PAT (CONT'D)

Honest to God. It's the truth.

DEBBIE

Pat! 'Bite me'. Really? That's not very nice.

PAT

Oh, but it's in the script. I have to keep true to the written word, don't I? Now look what you've all done. I've lost the moment before.

Debbie opens the cash register, puts Pat's receipts under the cash drawer, takes cash from the register and hands it to Pat. She does the same for Kate.

KATE

She's incorrigible today.

DEBBIE

Knock it off. I got a letter from Wendy. She's coming home today. I want everything to be nice. This is important to me. I haven't seen her for over a year. So stop. Just stop your... whatever you're doing!

Debbie waves her hand over her face and magically summons a more pleasant disposition. She turns to Kate and--

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Thanks for shopping for me. Now, tell me. Who's this man you met at bingo last night?

KATE

He's really very charming ...
 (to Pat)
 I saw that. You rolled your eyes.
 (to Debbie)
 She rolled her eyes at me.

PAT

You've been divorced for what...
 twenty-five years, and I've never
 known you to have a relationship
 with any man for more than a week.
 What makes you think this guy is
 different than the others. Because
 he's a snappy dresser?
 (to Debbie)
 I'm sorry. But it's true.

KATE

As God is my witness, I don't know
 what's the matter with you today.
 You're behaving like an... idiot!

Kate plops on the couch, takes out the Twinkie from her
 pocket and stares at it, like it was saying something to her.

PAT

Okay, I deserve that. I'm a jerk.
 (to Kate)
 Are you going to eat that thing?
 You're fondling it like a sex toy.

Debbie groans loudly that carries a message for Pat.

DEBBIE

Before you criticize someone, you
 should walk a mile in their shoes.

PAT

Really, now. And why is that?

DEBBIE

That way, when you criticize them,
 you're a mile away and you have
 their shoes.

Debbie grits her teeth: humor with a message.

PAT

I'm sorry, Debbie. Kate's a good looking woman, but she doesn't take care of herself. Look at her. She eats too much.

KATE

What are you saying, Pat? You saying I look like shit?

Pat queries Debbie with a look, as if to say 'did you hear what I just heard?', and Mrs. Bauer looks confused at the quizzical looks between Debbie and Pat.

DEBBIE

Kate said shit. Kate never curses.

The phone rings.

KATE

That's Mike. The guy in the wheelchair from the VA. He's not going to make it tonight. It's unclear to me why.

PAT

Oh, Mrs. Bauer. I didn't tell you. Kate is a bit clairvoyant. Knows who's ringing on the phone, can see the future, that sort of thing.

Pat answers the phone.

PAT (CONT'D)

Oh, hello Mr. Simpson.

(Waits a second)

I'm so sorry to hear that. Well, I'm not going to be there either. They will just have to manage without us. Okay. Bye now.

(hangs up)

You buy clothes from Goodwill. You have a pretty face, Kate, but you never wear makeup. Why is that?

Pat points to the Twinkie and Kate puts it in her pocket.

KATE

I eat merely to keep my mind off food. And I don't want to wear makeup because I don't want to look like a sleazebag, like you.

PAT

Oh, good grief.

KATE

Shut up. Shut up. SHUT UP.

Mrs. Bauer struggles to keep her head where Debbie wants it. Mrs. Bauer sneaks a peak at Pat through the mirror. Pat winks at her and Kate sits down.

PAT

Hey, what do you say, Mrs. Bauer. You want a part in this play?

Mrs. Bauer thinks for a second then nods.

PAT (CONT'D)

Okay. Say something. You're on, Mrs. Bauer.

Mrs. Bauer hesitates for a second then--

MRS. BAUER

Never take a sleeping pill and a laxative on the same night. I learned that the hard way.

PAT

Very good, Mrs. Bauer.
(to Kate)
Wasn't that good?

Kate takes out the Twinkie again and opens it this time, and gobbles the whole thing in two gulps.

DEBBIE

Please stop moving your head.

Pat and Kate both pick up magazines at the same time and begin reading. Kate snaps through the pages as she reads.

PAT

I'm just trying to get her off her butt to take care of herself. Do I get any gratitude? Noooo!

DEBBIE

(pointing to a wall photo)
That's my daughter over there.

MRS. BAUER

Yes, you told me, Mrs. Hammel.
She's very pretty.

DEBBIE

She gets her looks from her father.
And she gets her talent from me.
(points to another photo)
That's me and my late husband. He
died when Wendy was twelve.

MRS. BAUER

Oh, I'm so sorry.

DEBBIE

Oh, that's okay. It was a long time ago. Wendy went to Cambridge on a scholarship. Got a job with the Boston Philharmonic right after graduating. They're playing at Carnegie this week. In fact, she'll be here any minute. The girls here are not supposed to do any acting in the meantime.

Mrs. Bauer cannot see the snarl Debbie gives to Kate and Pat.

Debbie taps Mrs. Bauer on the shoulder and points to the MS Magazine picture of Pat on the wall.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Do you know who that is?

Mrs. Bauer looks at the picture, then at Pat.

MRS. BAUER

Wow. It's her, isn't it?

DEBBIE

Pat, Why don't you tell Mrs. Bauer why you're on the cover?

Pat keeps her head buried in her magazine.

PAT

Because I was the oldest woman in the country to get goosed by the President of the United States.

DEBBIE

PAT!

Pat keeps her head buried in her magazine. While Kate does the same--

KATE

She's incorrigible today. Don't waste your breath.

DEBBIE

I want you to stop it, right now, Pat. What's Mrs. Bauer going to think?

Pat puts the magazine down on her lap and looks Mrs. Bauer right in the eye.

PAT

That's me on the Ms. Magazine cover, Issue Nine. September of last year. I was the first woman to receive a lifetime achievement award from a NY City VA hospital.

Pat went back to reading.

DEBBIE

Impressive, huh?

(removing the bib)

Okay, Mrs. Bauer. Finished. That'll be twenty dollars.

Mrs. Bauer gets up and takes a long look in the mirror.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Give it a couple of days. Let it live a bit. If you think it's too long after that, then come in and I'll trim it. On the house.

Mrs. Bauer nods her approval of what she saw in the mirror. She reaches in her pocketbook and pays Debbie.

MRS. BAUER

Thank you. I like it. Keep the change. I'll show myself out.

Debbie puts the money in the register, then slams it shut. She waits, silently, until she hears the front door close, which gives her permission to groan loudly.

She sits on the chair previously occupied by Mrs. Bauer, and Debbie alternately looks at Kate and Pat. They appear to be pretending to ignore each other.

PAT

(as she pretends to read)
I know what you're thinking. That's why I'm ignoring you.

Finally, Debbie cannot hold it in any longer.

DEBBIE

Thank you both for acting so mature in front of a NEW customer. I would not be surprised if she never came back here. And, you know, that's not even the point. I asked both of you to keep the drama down because Wendy is coming. But you can't do that, can you?

Kate and Pat just sit there, like scolded children. Finally, Pat puts her magazine down and--

PAT

Listen, I'm happy that Wendy is playing at Carnegie. It'll be nice to see her again.

KATE

I'm sure your daughter wants to iron things out.

Debbie covers her face with her hands.

DEBBIE

I can't do it. I can't even take thirty steps to get the mail without falling down, so how am I going to go to New York City? And then we'll get into an argument. I just know it. I just can't.

KATE

That's negative projection.

PAT

For once, I agree with Kate. Let's just enjoy her company while she's here.

Debbie takes a long, hard gaze at the two girls, who now seem to be buddy, buddy.

DEBBIE

Well... Thank you for going to the store for me.

PAT

Hey. We get our hair done for nothing. It works out in the end.

KATE

That reminds me, I should be getting my first perm soon.

PAT

Don't have me do it.

DEBBIE

You know, Wendy thinks her birth was the cause of my... condition.

PAT

Was it?

DEBBIE

No. But her birth was difficult.

KATE

How so?

DEBBIE

I remember when my water broke. There was a three-alarm fire that night when Henry drove me to the hospital.

Debbie starts to drift mentally back to that night.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Harry drove like a maniac to the hospital that night in our old Ford '67 Bronco wagon. The ambulance's siren was blaring in front of us. They were rushing down a road to the hospital with us. The storm... The high winds... The car swayed... Swerved... The raging winds and torrential rain... Too much. Lightning bolts stabbed at the darkness. A tree fell down and almost hit us. Harry sped... Too fast... Ambulance... Getting closer... Harry swerved to miss a windblown garbage can. I groaned, then growled, then screamed.

PAT

Everything is okay. I'm here.

DEBBIE

(hallucinating)

The flashing lights... The sounds of the fire trucks. They were everywhere... It was unbearable.

Debbie deep breathes-anxiety.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Pat... Wendy... You don't understand. She's... She's...

PAT
Easy. In... Out

Debbie did as instructed.

KATE
Read the letter. It'll make you
feel better.

Pat threw a look of disdain towards Kate, as if to tell her
to 'shut up'.

DEBBIE
Harry parked on the lawn because
emergency vehicles were everywhere.
He threw an accident victim off a
gurney and raised me on it. He
wheeled me into the hospital. The
lights inside flickered because the
generator was faulty. Something was
wrong with the emergency power. I
remember... The lights flickered at
first then they went out totally,
and I panicked as blood trickled
down my leg.

Debbie scratches her leg until it started to bleed.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
All I could hear was footsteps of
people while they pulled me into
the delivery room. Push, PUSH,
somebody yelled, so I pushed.

Kate handed Pat a napkin, and she wiped the streak of blood
that was running down Debbie's leg.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
The flickering lights made me sick.
I threw up on myself.

Pat leads Debbie to her desk; opens the window for fresh air.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
Help me. My baby is bleeding.

PAT

Hang on, Debbie. Breath in.

DEBBIE

Where's the doctor?

PAT

You're okay. You're here with us.

DEBBIE

All these people... Screaming... Too much noise. Someone help me.

PAT

Look! See. It's me. Pat. You're safe with me. And there's Kate.

DEBBIE

No... No. You don't understand. The neon lights... Flickering. They're stabbing my eyes. Where's my baby? Where's my baby? Where's Wendy?

PAT

She probably wasn't born yet.

DEBBIE

What do you mean she wasn't born yet? Of course she was born. See.

Debbie shows Pat the blood running down her leg.

PAT

You did that, scratching your leg.

Debbie moans loudly and pushes herself up from her seat.

DEBBIE

There's flickering lights everywhere. People running... Screaming orders while Wendy... She's... She's...

Debbie moans and pushes as if she's giving birth right there.

Pat sees the streak of blood down Debbie's leg and goes to the coffee table to get some napkins. She wipes Debbie's leg.

Debbie flicks her arms as if she's hailing a taxi.

PAT

Debbie. You're okay. Stop.

Pat manages to carry Debbie to the outside door.

PAT (CONT'D)

Let's get you some fresh air.

DEBBIE

Help me. My baby is bleeding.

PAT

Hang on, Debbie. We're almost there.

EXT. DEBBIE'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Pat opens the front door and directs Debbie to the settee bench on the porch.

DEBBIE

Where's the doctor?

PAT

Come on. Breath. In... Out.

A car comes to a stop close by making a screeching noise.

DEBBIE

All these people... Screaming... Too much noise. Someone help me.

PAT

Look! It's me. You're safe with me.

DEBBIE

The neon lights... Stabbing my eyes. Where's my baby? Where's my baby?

Debbie stops babbling, shakes her head and looks around, as if she coming out of a trance.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

There's an interview of her in the paper. She has tickets?

PAT

God, Debbie. You haven't gotten past the mailbox in ages. What makes you think you can go to the deli and get the paper?

DEBBIE

I have to try to make it. But, I can't. It's too hard.

Kate comes running up the porch and hands Debbie the paper.

KATE

Compliments of Mrs. Aldrich.

DEBBIE

Wendy... She's...

KATE

You must be so proud of her.

Pat pulls Kate aside while Debbie reads the paper.

PAT

Debbie is uncomfortable having you see her this way. You disappear, and I'll handle this.

KATE

I know I'm only here a few weeks, but I want to help.

PAT

You've already helped by stealing Mrs. Aldrich's paper. You can get Debbie some hot tea if you really want to help.

Kate leaves for inside the house as Debbie stands up.

DEBBIE

I'm ok now. Let's go back to work.

As they head back into the office, Debbie retrieves the photo from her pocket and hands it to Pat.

PAT

What's this?

DEBBIE

It came in the letter.

Pat takes a long look and hands it back.

PAT

She looks good.

(pause)

You know, Trevor loved Wendy very deeply. They were going to marry before she went away to college, but something happened in their senior year in high school.

DEBBIE

I didn't know that. Why are you telling me this now?

PAT

I don't know. Because I think we're going to find out today why she hasn't written or called or texted. I think her incognito behavior has something to do with that.

DEBBIE

The job with Boston Philharmonic just fell in her lap. That's why she took the Cambridge scholarship 'cause the University was so close. Who knows what would've happened if she went somewhere else.

PAT

That's the least of my concerns. Trevor and I want to know why she never returned Trevor's texts.

DEBBIE

I wonder why too. Is she so stuck up that she doesn't care about us.

PAT

She looks good though. I can't wait to see her tonight.

DEBBIE

You know how many times I've seen her since she left for Boston. Zip. Zero. Nada. Trevor is not the only one she's dissed.

PAT

Perhaps this visit will change all that. Be happy she wants you at her concert. Will you go?

DEBBIE

Are you serious? I can't even get the mail without an incident.

EXT. CURBISDE RIGHT OUTSIDE DEBBIE'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A taxi appears curbside. Wendy sits in the back seat.

The taxicab turns to Wendy and--

TAXI DRIVER

Just go in there and talk to her. You got this.

WENDY

Would you mind terribly if we just sit here a bit. I have to find my courage. I lost it on the ride.

The taxi driver nods and turns off the engine.

INT. DEBBIE'S BEAUTY PARLOR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Debbie and Pat are quiet at the moment when Kate walks in from the kitchen with Debbie's tea.

KATE

Two tea bags in a cup of water. In the microwave for 3 minutes. Then I put three tablespoons of sugar in another cup. When the tea is done, I let the two tea bags steep in the hot water for one minute before I pour it in the colder cup. Just the way you like it.

DEBBIE

Yes. You make the best tea.

KATE

We'll have to teach Wendy how to make it.

DEBBIE

Let's not get into that. If you were more like my daughter, I would starve to death.

KATE

(waving Twinkie wrapper)

Yeah, I know how that feels.

PAT

It looks like you've never had that feeling.

KATE

You're being very snooty today.

PAT

Oh, no! I'm snooty! I'll be losing sleep on that one tonight.

Kate throws down her magazine.

KATE

You're just a saucy impudent person. You have no ... couth.

PAT

No couth. Oh, no. Now I'm really going to lose sleep tonight.

DEBBIE

Girls! Stop it! I've had enough of this ... bickering ... or whatever this is. Here, Kate. Help me with this bracelet. I need three hands to put it on.

KATE

It's nice. Where did you get it?

DEBBIE

A birthday gift from Harry.

(Looks to the ceiling)

Thanks, Harry.

KATE

Is that your dead husband?

PAT

Oh, that's just ducky. Now you two have something in common. You both talk to dead people.

KATE

I don't talk to the dead. I feel their presence. There's a difference.

PAT

Well, some day you'll have to explain that to me.

DEBBIE

Okay. Before it gets out of hand, stop it now.

PAT

I'm just trying to be helpful. Look at her. She always give a big warm welcome to anything edible.

KATE

See what I mean, Debbie? She's just a snippy person. Snip, snip, snip.

DEBBIE

Pat. Kate. Please!!!

KATE

Well, she doesn't have the right to insult me just because she's in a bad mood.

Kate gets up and stands over Pat, as if she's ready to wrestle her.

KATE (CONT'D)

You're a meddling blabbermouth.
Ooo! Look at me. I'm on the cover
of Ms. Magazine.

Kate spots a powder puff sitting in a box of face powder. She picks it up and throws it at Pat, which results in a big, circular white stain on Pat's shirt.

A cloud of powder floats over her created by the powder puff.

Pat gets up and saunters over to the coffee table. She reaches for a powder puff, dabs it in the box and throws it at Kate, hitting her smack in the face.

PAT

Oh, yeah! I see what you mean. It
feels very satisfying.

Kate picks up the powder puff at her feet and begins hitting Pat on the head.

DEBBIE

Girls! Stop it.

Pat turns on Debbie and hits her with a powder puff square in the head, and before long all the women are slinging powder puffs at each other, like they are having a pillow fight. In the meantime, they are creating a cloud of smoke in the room.

Their clothes and face are enshrouded with white soot, and when the dust settles, Kate seems to have gotten the worst of it. Debbie and Pat collapse on the sofa laughing at the sight of Kate's face.

As they calm down, Kate starts to speak and a puff of smoke out of her mouth, which starts another round of laughter.

EXT. FRONT OF DEBBIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The taxi cab driver follows Wendy up to the porch and into the house towing her two suitcases. She is wearing her Yankee hat to make sure everyone knows where her allegiances lie.

INT. DEBBIE'S HOUSE - BEAITY PARLOR ENTRANC - CONTINUOUS

The laughter in the beauty parlor keeps Wendy at bay. She turns to the to the cab driver and--

WENDY

Leave the suitcases in the corner.
I'll be out in a few minutes and
then we'll go to Manhattan.

The Taxi driver does as asked and quietly leaves the house.

Wendy follows the laughter and slowly approaches the parlor. Cautiously, she enters.

BEAUTY PARLOR

Wendy appears at the parlor door and Pat runs to her for an embrace. The dust flies off Patricia's shoulders as if she was on fire. Wendy looks at everyone in the room and--

WENDY (CONT'D)

(to Pat)

Looks like you got the worst of it.

PAT

So good to see you, Wendy. It's
been way too long.

WENDY

Good to see you too, Pat. Looks
like you got the worst of it.

PAT

Come in. Come in. Let me introduce
you. This is Kate who really got
the worst of all this. She's the
new member of our team. She's a cat-
lover, so pardon the smell, and
she's a bit on the clairvoyant
side, so watch what you think.

KATE

Nice to meet you, Wendy. I heard so
much about you. I see you're a
Yankee fan. And you live in Boston!
Isn't that a little dangerous?

WENDY

People are nice in Bean Town, but it is a tough place to be a Yankee fan, for sure. Especially since they beat the Red Sox for the pennant this year. By the way, did you know how Boston got it's nickname, 'Bean Town'. Back in the colonial days, the Boston people loved baked beans - beans slow-baked in molasses. I looked it up on the internet. That was a staple food in their diet.

Everyone nods, as if it appears on the internet then it has to be true. And awkward silence ensues. Finally--

DEBBIE

Dear, you should've told me earlier you were coming? I have to hear about your concert on TV?

WENDY

Glad to see you too, Mom!

DEBBIE

Are you, really?

WENDY

Ok. Let's try this.

Wendy hands the tickets to Debbie.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Here. They're for tomorrow night. We have a rehearsal in an hour and the taxi's waiting outside, so I don't have much time. I'll be back later on. Early evening, perhaps. I just wanted to drop off the tickets now and later I wanted to explain why I've been missing in action for so long.

(to Pat)

I want so much to know how Trevor is doing, but I just don't have the time right now. Please understand.

PAT

I do.

The face Debbie makes says differently.

WENDY

Got a problem with that, Mom?

DEBBIE

No. You gotta do what you gotta do.

WENDY

What's that supposed to mean?

PAT

Stop it, you two. Listen, Wendy, Trevor will be so happy you're home. You should call him and...

WENDY

Yes. Yes. I will. I'm looking forward to seeing him.

PAT

Do you need his number? I have his number, if you need it.

WENDY

Unless he changed it, I have it, Pat. I'll call.

KATE

Imagine! Carnegie Hall! Isn't this exciting?

PAT

Yes. Isn't all this very exciting.

Just then Trevor barges in with a box in his hand, and his jogger's suit on.

TREVOR

Mom, I brought over... Wendy...

He opens his mouth, but nothing comes out.

WENDY

Trevor...

TREVOR

Did you lose your cell phone?

WENDY

I'm sorry. We'll do this later, if you don't mind.

Wendy exits just as Debbie collapses in a chair. Everyone in the parlor remains silent. Finally--

PAT

What the hell was that? 'Did you lose your cell phone?' Really, Trevor? That's the first thing you ask after not hearing from her all this time?

TREVOR

It just came over to... Never mind. Leave me alone.

DEBBIE

Did you see the way she looked at me?

KATE

I felt it too. Bad vibes all around.

PAT

Everyone just shut up. There was no vibes at all.

KATE

Dear Dorothy, give me patience.

(to Pat)

Her eyes were judging Debbie. It was in her voice, too. Didn't you hear it?

DEBBIE

Most definitely. I heard it. Her voice was so tense and--

PAT

SHUT UP. There were no vibes and no tension in her voice. So everyone just cool it for a moment.

DEBBIE

I'm going to the porch to sit down.
I need to think in quiet.

Debbie leaves. An awkward silence follows. Finally--

PAT

I should go buy a lottery ticket.
My luck has got to change.
(to Trevor)
Are you okay?

TREVOR

I'm fine.

PAT

So, what's in the box?

TREVOR

(handing the box to Pat)
I wanted to drop this off before but it was still in the oven and you weren't here. It's a peace offering for this morning. Homemade fudge. I made it myself. Some for you too, Kate. And Debbie if she wants it.

KATE

Yummy. How come you're not teaching? Today's a school day, isn't it?

TREVOR

I have an appointment with the Army recruiter, so I called in sick.

PAT

Kate, some tea would go well with this, if you please. Water is already hot on the stove.

Kate grabs a piece of fudge and eats it.

KATE

Hmm, this is delicious.

Kate starts to exit but stops close to the door and listens.

PAT

I know you're upset, Dear, but is it so hard to understand I don't want you in the military? I'm afraid of you lying dead in a ditch somewhere in Afghanistan. No one to give you comfort when you need it.

TREVOR

I know there are risks, but why aren't you proud of me?

PAT

My God, Trevor. Will you listen to yourself? If you don't sound just like your father.

TREVOR

That's not such a bad thing. I think he'd be proud of me if he were alive.

PAT

God, this is déjà vu all over again.

Kate steps back in--

KATE

Did you want milk and sugar with that, Trevor?

TREVOR

I changed my mind. I'm not staying. Thanks, anyway, Kate. Next time.

As Trevor starts to leave--

TREVOR (CONT'D)

Oh! What did Wendy want, Mom?

PAT

She's in town with the philharmonic for a concert tomorrow. She just came by to drop off these tickets.

TREVOR

Is there a ticket in there for me?
(response to no answer)
I see.

Trevor leaves.

PAT

Well, that went well, don't you think?

(sighs)

I have to prepare for that at-home shampoo. Help me with the shampoos and conditioners.

The phone rings.

KATE

That's Mrs. Johnson. Her dog just died and she wants to cancel her appointment.

Pat picks up the phone and listens. After a beat--

PAT

I'm so sorry, Mrs. Johnson. I hope you're okay.

(pause)

Oh, you bought a goldfish and you're feeling much better. That's nice. Well you call back when you're feeling better.

Pat hangs up the phone.

KATE

I don't trust animals without eyelids. Creepy.

PAT

Yeah. Well you're creepy. Go check the advertisements in the papers. Come on. Let's go. Chop, chop.

KATE

I'm not moving until you tell me why you never told Trevor that his father is alive.

PAT

I swear, Kate. Keep your nose out of my business.

KATE

Or else what?

(silence)

He needs to know his father's alive.

PAT

Now how do you know that, and what gives you the right to tell me what to do with my son? You know nothing about how to raise a boy.

KATE

I agree, and thank God I don't have to raise one, but I feel how much you're aching inside to find Joey and to tell Trevor the truth about him. I can help, you know. I'm good at finding people.

PAT

The only man in your life is this mysterious man who knows how to tap dance. Big deal. So get away from me with that psychic crap.

Debbie comes in with a bouquet of flowers. She reads the card and hands the flowers to Kate.

DEBBIE

(To Kate)

A delivery man just came and gave me this.

(MORE)

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

At first I thought they were for me. But the card says these are for you. It's from Dan. I'm going upstairs to change.

Kate reads the card as Debbie left, and then sets the flowers on the table.

PAT

That was nice of him.

KATE

I hesitate even saying this, Pat, but you're not the only one who was in love. I was in love at one time. The guy's name was Frank.

PAT

You? In love?

KATE

Yeah, really, to a part-time acting coach. He loved the fact that I did a Kramer vs Kramer monologue one time in school. After I recited that, he took me out and we danced all night. He's a great dancer. And when I told him I had more than one cat, he told me has two cats. We fell in love from that moment on.

PAT

(thinking)

Hmm. Joey was a wonderful dancer.

KATE

Really! Tell me more.

(response to Pat's grunt)

Come on. Loosen up. Talk to me. I'm not an ogre.

PAT

It was so long time ago, Kate. I was twenty-three, and we both had a little too much to drink that night. We met at a church social, actually.

(MORE)

PAT (CONT'D)

I introduced myself, and it was all over. We spent our first night together on a blanket at Jones Beach. It was spectacular! Anyway, how long were you and Frank together? For one orgasm, or what?

DEBBIE

(she sits)
Oh, good grief.

KATE

Don't start. This conversation is going nicely so far.

Pat appears contrite. She takes her time and sits.

KATE (CONT'D)

How about you? Did that 'spectacular' moment continue with Joey?

PAT

That's none of your business.

KATE

Come on. I'm not taking your blood. I'm just asking questions.

PAT

Ah, what the heck. That first night led to a long, steamy summer, right out of one of those romance novels. We screwed like gerbils. By the end of August we had marriage on our agendas. Then Grenada happened.

KATE

Granada. That sounds like a power bar or a resort, doesn't it? What the hell happened in Granada?

PAT

It was no vacation for him, believe me. There were 19 US casualties and 116 more troops were wounded. One of them was Joey.

KATE

Was that how you lost touch?

PAT

Yeah, I guess it was.

KATE

Why is this so hard for you?

PAT

Because we didn't get married
before he shipped out.

Kate folded her arms and sat back and waited for more.

PAT (CONT'D)

We argued over it and he left
without even saying goodbye. If he
loved me, he could've given me a
ring, or some kind of hope.

KATE

Why not wait until he got back?

PAT

I just couldn't do that.

KATE

Why the hell not?

PAT

You see! This is why I didn't want
to start this conversation. Now I
have to tell you everything.
BECAUSE I WAS PREGNANT, damn it.

Pat takes a single rose from the bouquet of flowers and snaps
it in half.

PAT (CONT'D)

The last thing I told him was marry
me or leave. God, Kate, if I could
only take those words back.

KATE

So, he left?

PAT

Yes. He left. I guess I should've told him I was pregnant when I had the chance. But he was gone before I could even say anything. And I didn't know that was the last time I was going to see him before...

Pat unlocks a desk drawer, takes out a photo and holds it close to her breast, then slowly makes her way over to Kate.

PAT (CONT'D)

Actually, I started volunteering at the VA Hospital after he left. A year later he shows up as a patient and I found out his convoy was caught in a fire fight. His face was mangled pretty bad. He couldn't even talk. As time passed I realized we were never going to get back together, and as Trevor got older, it was just easier to tell him his father died in Granada.

EXT. DEBBIE'S PORCH - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Mondale appears on the porch. She walks right in the house without knocking as if she has done it before. She waits at the parlor door and eavesdrops.

INT. DEBBIE'S BEAUTY PARLOR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Although they have cleaned up pretty well from the powder fight, they still bore the tell-tale signs of the skirmish. Pat noticed Kate still had some powder on her face, so she takes a tissue and strokes Kate's neck and face.

PAT

I guess I was a little hard on you today. You're not fat, really. Just a little plump. And a touch naive, perhaps.

KATE

So now you're calling me stupid?

Kate pushes Pat away.

PAT

I didn't say that.
 (turns to Debbie)
 Did I say that?

DEBBIE

You two just can't stop yourself,
 today, can you? Well, for
 punishment you have to hear a new
 joke I've learned. So, listen up.

PAT

Please don't do that.

DEBBIE

A little old lady was running up
 and down the halls in a nursing
 home. As she walked, she would flip
 up the hem of her nightgown and say
 'supersex'. She walked up to an
 elderly man in a wheelchair,
 flipped her gown at him, and said,
 'supersex'. He sat silently for a
 moment or two and finally answered,
 'I'll take the soup'.

Debbie moves over to the couch and sits.

PAT

I wish you wouldn't do that. You
 talk too fast. And the punch line
 requires more ... passion. And please
 don't quit your day job.

Pat directs her attention back to Kate who was staring at
 herself in the mirror.

PAT (CONT'D)

You haven't been very lucky with
 men, is all I'm trying to say.
 Maybe that's a better way to put
 it. Twenty-plus years is a long
 time to go without sex. The
 chemical buildup is probably
 overbearing.

(MORE)

PAT (CONT'D)

The pores of your skin become volcanic eruption points. It screws up your mind somehow.

KATE

Oh, so now I'm sexually deprived? At least I'm not a floozy like you.

Pat holds her chest, as if she has been wounded.

KATE (CONT'D)

Why do you volunteer at the VA hospital, anyway? Huh?

Pat thinks for a moment.

PAT

You know, normally you would just say something like, 'Well, I'm sorry you feel that way' or throw in a simple 'oh, that's nice' or something like that. But today is different. What is it?

KATE

That's probably because I know Mrs. Mondale is hiding behind the parlor door.

PAT

Well, if she is here she'd be the first one to tell you that I volunteer at the VA because I love men in uniform.

Mrs. Mondale comes out from behind the parlor door.

MR. MONDALE

You surround yourself with a lot of men so you don't have to get close to any one in particular.

PAT

Is that so?

Mrs. Mondale forces a laugh and sits down next to Debbie.

KATE

Yes. Right on. Mrs. Mondale
 (to Pat)
 Boo Hoo. The only man I ever loved
 gone. Poor me.

DEBBIE

(yelling)
 Pat. Kate. Both of you. Stop it.

KATE

She still loves someone who
 disappeared from her life twenty-
 five years ago. How emotionally
 stable is that?

(to Pat)

Well, get over it. He's disabled
 and he's not coming back. And stop
 insinuating I'm frigid.

Debbie goes to object, but Pat holds up her hand like a
 traffic cop and--

PAT

It's okay, I deserved that. And
 Kate, yes, I loved him very much.
 There is always something about the
 first love, which leaves an
 indelible mark on the soul. For me,
 no man ever came close to providing
 the sensual feelings Joey stirred.
 He treated me with dignity and
 equality and humor. I felt alive
 with him, and he had as much to do
 with my adventurous spirit as
 anyone. I learned how to water ski
 with him. I got stuck in a raging
 river and we almost died together.
 Then he went to war. And our
 relationship was over, and I have
 not come to any closure. I still
 have an open wound which I cover up
 with a lot of bravado. Yes, every
 man I meet is compared to Joey.
 I've created an impossible
 situation for me to move on.

(MORE)

PAT (CONT'D)

I've created this perfect model of a man that even Joey couldn't live up to if he were here today.

MRS. MONDALE

Nicely put. It's the uniform that attract the women. And Debbie, I agree with Pat. Don't give up your day job. No wash today. Just trim a couple of inches off the back.

Debbie and Mrs. Mondale both move to the industrial chair and Debbie works on Mrs. Mondale's hair. Kate and Pat read magazines. No one is talking. They look at each other briefly, like they are a little leery of one another.

Pat turns a page with a force that almost rips the page. Kate produces a loud snap as she flips the page on the magazine.

MRS. MONDALE (CONT'D)

Well, if no one is talking, I guess I'll read, too. Kate... Please.

Before Kate has a chance to respond, Pat grabs a magazine and throws it to Elaine like a Frisbee.

MRS. MONDALE (CONT'D)

Well, Kate. What's new with you? Are you still frigid?

KATE

MRS. MONDALE! Not you too.

MRS. MONDALE

That was funny, but so wrong. I'm sorry. I was just trying to lighten the mood. I'm never this way unless I'm here with you guys. Pat, you're the devil incarnate. You're a bad influence on me.

(to Kate)

In my defense, the last time I was here, I did hear Pat say...

PAT

Yeah. Yeah. Blah, Blah, Blah! Pat said shit.

Pat gives a 'no way' face to Kate and Debbie stops cutting Elaine's hair and points the pair of scissors at Pat.

DEBBIE

Can we keep this low key, today.
Please! I don't think I can go
another round like yesterday.

Pat nods and goes back to reading. She gives up a few moments of silence, then--

PAT

So what's this about telling your
neighbor that we do staged plays
for Debbie's customers.

MRS. MONDALE

I've done enough interviews on you
to write a biography. And I've seen
plenty here to know that everything
is an act with you.

DEBBIE

(to Pat)

She's got your number.

MRS. MONDALE

Don't get me wrong. I love you
dearly, Pat. I consider you a
friend. Nothing wrong with having
fun in life, I say.

PAT

What's your point, Elaine? You can
always tell when you're talking to
a writer. They give you several
paragraphs of bullshit before they
get to the point.

MRS. MONDALE

That's assuming I have a point.

KATE

No. No. We're among friends. You
have a point. I'd like to hear it.

MRS. MONDALE

(to Pat)

Well. It's my opinion that you felt abandoned when you thought Joey died in Granada. You haven't forgotten that and you haven't forgiven him either. You're mad at the world. Hence, you use it as a stage. No commitments. No risks. In and out, so to speak.

KATE

Yes.

Kate gives a victory pump.

MRS. MONDALE

And you, Kate. Just clock Pat once and get it over with.

PAT

Oh, aren't we the all-wise?

MRS. MONDALE

Observant, is all.

PAT

Intrusive, you mean.

MRS. MONDALE

You have an opinion, I have mine.

KATE

Good for you, Elaine. That's one for the home team.

PAT

Really? Well, I've chosen my lifestyle and I'm proud at what I've accomplished. I also consider you a friend, albeit a mouthy bitch who opts for wordy sentences as a defense for being honest. Although I'm not very moved by your honesty, I do accept it.

(to Kate)

(MORE)

PAT (CONT'D)

And you are one of my best friends as well. And I don't care if you're frigid.

KATE

That's it. I'm taking you off my speed dial. And I'm leaving.

PAT

Hey, Elaine was the one who called you frigid first.

As Kate is leaving--

KATE

(to Pat)

You're just jealous because I met a man, and you haven't been with one in decades.

After Kate leaves - silence.

PAT

That's not true. I had sex last week... in a wheelchair. Don't knock it if you haven't tried it.

LATER - AT THE PARLOR

While Debbie finishes up CUSTOMER ONE, Kate is also finishing up on another CUSTOMER TWO, and Pat is sitting on the couch reading a magazine.

Customer One looks into the mirror, nods her approval and hands Debbie a twenty dollar bill.

CUSTOMER ONE

Keep the change.

While Debbie put the money in the register--

DEBBIE

Come back later in the week and we'll do the perm.

The Customer One nods as she leaves.

Customer Two looks into a hand-held mirror at her cut.

CUSTOMER TWO

Good. I can live with this for a few days. I'll come in next Monday and see what needs to be done.

She hands Kate twenty dollars and leaves.

LATER

All three are sitting reading magazines. Pat looks at the clock and puts her magazine down.

PAT

(to Debbie)

Okay. Come on. We're going to Mrs. Nelson's house to give her a perm.

DEBBIE

I can't go.

PAT

There's nothing to worry about. I'm driving, Let's get a move on. Bring the curling iron and the shampoo. We might even want to style her hair, if not today than maybe next time. We're going and that's that.

INT. PAT'S CAR - DAY - A LITTLE LATER

While sitting patiently in the car in Debbie's driveway, Pat 'air-plays' the piano on the steering wheel. Debbie comes out carrying a gym bag and a purse and jumps into the car.

DEBBIE

This isn't easy for me. Be gentle.

PAT

Have I ever steered you wrong? Trust me. Okay checklist: bottled water.

Debbie opens her gym bag and looks into it.

DEBBIE

Got it.

PAT

Cold compress? Tissues? Towels.

DEBBIE

Check. Check and check.

Debbie pulls out a few blindfolds from her purse. She puts one on and pulls it over her eyes as Pat starts the car.

PAT

Good. Now, background information. Mrs. Nelson owns two apartment complexes that she rents out. She's very particular. And very rich.

DEBBIE

Why does Nelson sound so familiar?

PAT

Her husband's a plumber. Her last name is on your toilet bowl. By the way, her cat just died, so be sensitive about talking about pets.

DEBBIE

Okay. What's she looking for?

PAT

Just a shampoo. That's it for now. I've been to her house a few times. She's very rich and gives hefty tips. Don't mention the dead cat, though. Okay. We're off to see the wizard.

As Pat moves down the driveway--

DEBBIE

Oh, God! Slow down.

PAT

Ease up girl. I haven't gone ten feet yet.

Debbie peeks over her blindfold, then resets it.

DEBBIE

Oh, my God. I don't think I can do this, Pat.

PAT

You can, and you will. And if all goes well today, maybe tomorrow..

DEBBIE

First things first. Now, slow down for crying out loud.

PAT

Let me make this traffic light.

Pat hit the accelerator hard, and Debbie yelps.

DEBBIE

This is so unfair! Why am I being punished like this?

Pat jams on the brakes and pulls Debbie's blindfold up.

PAT

Look at me, dammit! Look at me.

Debbie takes her time look at Pat and when she does, Pat slaps her across the face.

PAT (CONT'D)

A slap in the face is punishment for being a pain in my ass, not for your phobia. God has not given you with this affliction.

DEBBIE

Owe! That hurt. Have you lost your mind?

PAT

It was supposed to hurt. Now you have someone to blame for being hurt. Not yourself, not Wendy, not God. Blame me. See if that helps. Now put your blindfold back on. We don't want to be late.

Debbie puts the blindfold back on as Pat continues driving.

DEBBIE

(singing)

Dashing through the snow
In a one-horse open sleigh
Joker's on the go,
laughing all the way

PAT

(politely)

Debbie, will you please stop?

DEBBIE

(singing)

The bells on Penguins ring
Make Riddler wanna fight
Two-Face wants to flip a coin
And sing this song tonight.

PAT

I said stop! I'm not going to ask
you again.

DEBBIE

(singing)

Hey, Jingle bells, Batman smells
Robin laid an egg
Batmobile lost a wheel
And Joker got away...

Pat jams on the brakes and Debbie stops. Pat starts up again and Debbie gropes for the radio and turns it on. Debbie changes the station repeatedly until polka music plays. Pat reaches over and turns the radio off.

After a beat, Debbie turns it back on again, and finds a country western station. She turns the sound level up to an irritating level. Debbie shrieks out the lyrics (improvise) and Pat quickly turns the radio off.

Before Debbie could reach for the radio again--

PAT

I swear if you touch that button
one more time I'll beat you silly.
You think my slap in the face was
hard, I'll shove your stomach to
your backbone with one punch.

Debbie puts her hands on her lap and stoically looks ahead.

PAT (CONT'D)

Wise choice.

Just after saying this, Debbie flips the window up and down with the controls.

PAT (CONT'D)

STOP IT!

Pat reaches over to smack Debbie's hand away from the controls. While doing so she loses control of the car and--

PAT (CONT'D)

OH, MY GOD!

Just as she says this, the car smacks into a tree.

INT. DEBBIE'S HOUSE - BEAUTY PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

Wendy walked in from the foyer and Kate waved her in while talking into the phone. She put her pocket book down on the chair and waited for Kate to get off the phone.

KATE

(seductively)

Maybe we will. Thanks for calling.

WENDY

What did he say that's making you blush so?

KATE

He dialed the wrong number, and we just started talking. He said I had a bedroom voice.

WENDY

Oh, so he was flirtatious, huh? Or you were. Do you do that often?

KATE

I would never do that. It's not professional.

WENDY

Okay. Is my mom upstairs?

KATE

No. She went with Pat to a customer's house.

WENDY

Really. Hmm. If she's OK to go out to a customer's house, maybe she'll be okay to go tomorrow night.

KATE

Maybe. Who knows?

WENDY

Well, anyway, I promised the percussionist I'd have his car back by six. I can't wait.

KATE

I don't know if she'll be back in time. She'll be very disappointed.

WENDY

Me too. To be honest, I'm a little nervous about seeing her again.

KATE

Yes. I sense that. Confused might be a better word.

WENDY

I haven't told you the news yet.

KATE

I sense it's deep. It's bigger than just apologies.

WENDY

Oh, that's right. You're a clairvoyant. That's scary sometimes, isn't it?

Just then, Debbie and Pat walk into the office.

KATE

Oh, my God! What happened to you?
What's with the bandage, I mean?

PAT

She's ok, but my car isn't. She was playing with the radio and windows. I sideswiped a huge white pine tree while I was trying to deal with this crazy lady, here. I broke my rear view mirror, lost my bumper. We naturally didn't make it to Mrs. Nelson's house.

KATE

Well then, I see there's no reason for me to stay. My furry friends need to be fed and Wendy has something very important to tell you, Debbie. So I'll just say, sayonara.

Debbie nods as Kate leaves. After a brief period of silence--

DEBBIE

I'm glad you stopped back, Wendy.

WENDY

Are you, Mother?

DEBBIE

What's that supposed to mean?

WENDY

Absolutely nothing. Listen. If the accident becomes an excuse to miss my solo, you'll be pleased to know that PBS will be broadcasting the concert live.

DEBBIE

Why can't you be a little more ...

WENDY

A little more what? Compassionate?"

DEBBIE

No. Optimistic.

WENDY

Optimistic!? Hmm. Let's rewind the clock and replay my softball championship when I was very optimistic you'd be there.

DEBBIE

You have no idea what I've done so you could have a good education.

WENDY

Oh, no. Here we go again. Don't start Mother or...

DEBBIE

Or what? Going to leave for another two years? You have no gratitude. This is your senior class recital all over again. You never told me about that performance either.

PAT

Oh, boy. I think I better go.

Pat starts to leave, but Wendy stands in her way.

WENDY

Stay, Pat. She may need emotional support after I'm finished.

(to Debbie)

Well, hang tight, mother. Your ride is about to get a little bumpier.

Wendy faces Debbie as if she was about to do battle.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Let me tell you what it was like in high school with everyone talking behind my back.

DEBBIE

Oh, really, Wendy. You're gonna go there? You were a musical savant, for chrissakes.

(MORE)

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

If they were talking behind your back it was because twenty colleges were tripping over each other to give you a scholarship. Five orchestras were offering you a full time position before you even graduated. 'Oh, poor me, people are talking about me because I'm so wonderful.'

WENDY

Really, Mother? How did you get so enlightened being a recluse? You never came to one single Parent-Teachers meeting because of your (finger quotes) 'condition'. Not one recital in four years because of your 'condition'. Not one softball game because of your 'condition'. So, let me tell you, if they were talking about anyone, it was you, not me.

PAT

Wendy, all this is a bit unfair, don't you think?

WENDY

Is it fair my own mother blames me for her... 'condition'?

DEBBIE

I told you your birth was difficult. That's all. I don't blame you for anything.

WENDY

Not even two years of therapy has convinced me of that, Mother.

DEBBIE

Therapy!? Why would my daughter need therapy?

WENDY

Oh, my shrink warned me I might not be ready for this. He was right.

DEBBIE

Ready for what? To tell your mother the truth. After all I've done for you... you spoiled brat.

WENDY

The truth, Mother? I'll tell you the truth. Here comes the whole nine yards of truth. Do you remember the last recital we had when I was a senior in High School.

DEBBIE

I remember. You never let me forget. Your solo performance of 'Amazing Grace' brought the audience to their feet.

WENDY

It's not about that. It's about what happened to me when I walked home. People were getting into their cars and any one of them would've taken me home, but I didn't ask. I was going to experience the full pain of walking home. That's what I thought, but I didn't realize...

PAT

I think I'm going home.

WENDY

No. Please stay. This is important.

PAT

OK. OK. I'll stay.

Wendy faces her mother as if the following message is meant for her.

WENDY

You see mother, I was embarrassed to let people know I didn't have a ride home, so I snuck away. I figured the walk home was only a mile because I knew which yard to cut through and which dark alleys to take. Maybe you remember that night, Mom? My pants were torn and I had black-and-blues all over my legs. I said I fell off a fence on the way home, remember?

DEBBIE

I remember. You said you were in a hurry to get home to finish your book report.

WENDY

Yes. So, I cut through Davidson Street, past the Cherrywood Lounge. I heard noises and hesitated. There was a shadow of a figure who came out of Cherrywood Lounge who followed me to the picket fence that had a slat missing. There was enough room for me to get through. The missing slat provided me hope, but behind it was a busy street, and I hesitated. That's when I ripped my pants while I was being pulled by my ankles.

Debbie holds her ears with her hands.

DEBBIE

No more.

Wendy removes Debbie's hands from her ears.

WENDY

I remember watching a cloud drift in front of the moon when he stuffed my mouth with grass.

(MORE)

WENDY (CONT'D)

Then he punched me twice in the stomach, and in a gravelly, horrifying voice he said, 'I'll kill you if you scream.' so I didn't scream, not right away, at least. Then he covered my mouth with one hand while he unbuckled his filthy jeans with his other. I tried my best to scream but nothing came out of mouth but a whisper. I inhaled in quick spurts until I realized these were the convulsions of someone being raped.

Wendy had to stop. She held her chest and--

WENDY (CONT'D)

The ordeal of remembering is tougher than I thought. Whew. Anyway, then he finished with a sickly whimper, and he laid on top of me for a few seconds, enjoying his conquest, I suppose. He finally got up and buckled up his pants, and walked away, whistling while I lay there almost dying.

Debbie shakes her head and covers her ears again.

DEBBIE

No more. No more.

Wendy removes Debbie's hands again and--

WENDY

Wherever I go and a stranger enters the room, I still smell the stink of cigarettes and beer.

Debbie yelps, then a stunned silence fills the room.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Nothing to say, Mom?

DEBBIE

I told you to never go near the Cherrywood Lounge...

WENDY

Really. That's what you want to say after what I told you?

DEBBIE

What do you want me to say? That I'm going to try and go to Carnegie Hall tomorrow night. I can't. I just can't.

(pause)

Why did you wait so long to tell me?

WENDY

Because I was scared, Mother. I was scared that if I whispered a word of it to anyone he might come back and do it again or something worse.

No one speaks for a moment, then--

PAT

Is this the wonderful news you wanted to share with us, Wendy?

WENDY

Partly. Yes.

PAT

What else, then?

WENDY

I found out I was pregnant two months later, and the Maestro, instead of firing me, took me in his home. I got an abortion. It was a boy, mother. A boy that you've always wanted.

DEBBIE

Oh, my God. You killed my grandson? Dear God, this is all my fault.

Debbie stood and waved her hands as if there's nothing else to say. She faced the wall and sobbed.

WENDY

Cat got your tongue, Mother?

DEBBIE

Who's the... Who's... Who's...

WENDY

The father.

(responding to Debbie's nod)

Well, that's a good question. Could be Trevor's, I guess, or...

Wendy got very close to her mother's face and--

WENDY (CONT'D)

...the rapist's.

Pat clears her throat and--

PAT

Does Trevor know about this?

WENDY

He's always known about the rape, but not about the pregnancy. That's why I stayed away for so long and didn't write or call. I was ashamed. I felt guilty. I know I should've told Trevor. I know I should've gotten a DNA test, but I was so distraught and I didn't know what to do. So I didn't call anyone.

PAT

Wendy, I'm very sorry about what happened to you. What you just told us explains a lot. I could've been a grandmother, I guess. That would've been nice, but I think you did the right thing under the circumstance.

WENDY

I didn't call because I didn't know what to say. This is my first step.

(MORE)

WENDY (CONT'D)

My doctor assures me one step at a time is the way to go.

(starts to leave)

One thing hasn't changed, Mom. I can still leave the house knowing you won't follow me.

Wendy waits for a response, but gets none.

DEBBIE

But I do love you, Wendy. I want us to have a relationship. I want us to be close. I feel so lost without you.

WENDY

Yeah, me too. If I see you in the audience tomorrow night, then I'll know we can have a relationship. No more missed opportunities. Okay?

INT. TREVOR'S ROOM - NIGHT

Trevor sits at a small desk next to his bed correcting students' papers. Pat enters and sits on the bed. Trevor hands her a folder with the US Army crest on the cover.

She skims through the folder and looks up at Trevor. He shrugged his shoulders as if to say "maybe".

PAT

We have to talk.

INT. CARNEGIE HALL PRACTICE - NIGHT

Wendy sits with the string section on stage of the prestigious Isaac Stern Concert Hall at Carnegie Hall. There are several cello players to the right of the Maestro, in the front row, and Wendy occupies the far seat, next to Damian, one of the double bass players.

The musicians strum their instruments while looking around as if mesmerized by the ambiance of the room. Wendy's eyes take in the hall in one glance, as if lost in its splendor.

MAESTRO

That last set wasn't too bad. But I sense that some of you are a little intimidated by this place.

The Maestro holds his hands out and swirls around like an evangelist, as if to say, 'Behold, Carnegie Hall'. He stands before them with arms outstretched--

MAESTRO (CONT'D)

This is just another hall, people.

The performers laugh, appropriately. He takes a few seconds himself to weigh in on the ambience of the hall.

MAESTRO (CONT'D)

Hey, you people are the best. So... everyone, close your eyes and take a deep breath.

The musicians close their eyes and take a deep breath.

MAESTRO (CONT'D)

You're distracted by the magnificence of this place, and the way you sound now, I wouldn't schedule you to play at a high school graduation.

ON DAMIAN AND WENDY

Damian leans slightly to Wendy and whispers without moving a muscle on his face - a ventriloquist extraordinaire.

DAMIAN

He always gets this way close to opening night. Have you noticed?

The Maestro jerks his head in several directions, as if he hears the whispering but can't determine exactly where it is coming from. He listens with his right ear, then his left, trying to triangulate the source with his ears and eyes.

Wendy leans slightly towards Damian and speaks with a frozen face, also a very good ventriloquist.

WENDY

I know. I think he hears talking
but he doesn't know where it's
coming from.

The Maestro strikes his stick on the dais. The baton breaks
in two, sending half of it flying into the violin section. He
bends down and picks up another baton from his case, and
continues banging.

MAESTRO

I want QUIET.
(pauses)
That's better. Now, will everyone
please move to the Fifth Concerto.

The musicians turn their sheets, then stop. Damian leans
slightly to Wendy, and with no lip movement--

DAMIAN

You're his pet, you know.

MAESTRO

QUIET! I don't know who is talking,
but I want QUIET!

The Maestro waves his wand a few times and the musicians
begin playing. The depth of the sound is entrancing to the
normal ear, but the Maestro's eyes flicks back and forth as
if he is picking up the off tones.

He turns his head, as he listens. He looks in several
directions and finally raps his baton furiously on the dais.

MAESTRO (CONT'D)

No ... no ... no.
(pointing at Wendy)
You have the most splendid tool in
front of you and all you can do is
pluck on it. And Damian, don't lean
in so far when you speak. You are
giving yourself up by doing that.
(pause)
Remember, people.
(MORE)

MAESTRO (CONT'D)

If the cello sounds like a cello,
and a viola sounds like a viola and
a trumpet sounds like a trumpet,
then this orchestra will sound like
an orchestra. Well, ladies and
gentlemen, I'm here to tell you
that you are not just an orchestra.
You are much more than that. You
are one organism playing your soul.
You are as much an instrument as
the 'thing' you are playing. Unless
you can become one with the
instrument ... Unless you can let
your soul play and not your fingers
or hand or mouth, then I have
taught you nothing.

The Maestro hits his baton on the dais again and the orchestra plays with much more zest and vigor than before. He silently motions for everyone to stop, except for Wendy.

She plays on, alone, a flowing movement. Mesmerizing! She bursts into a Gothic chamber rock, and then settles into a more contemporary, solemn music.

The members of the orchestra rest their instruments while Wendy plays on. The Maestro looks across the stage and notices everyone seems bewitched by the beautiful sounds coming from her cello.

ON GARY

GARY, the bass drum player, sits in the back with the other percussionists watching her. He smiles and bounces his head back and forth.

ON DAMIAN

Damian's head swerves back and forth as if he were having a spiritual experience.

ON WENDY

She plays with great zest, as if taking hostility out on the instrument.

BACK TO SCENE

The Maestro closes his eyes and listens to the harmony created by the entire orchestra. They play the finale with an energy that was very physical. The piece ends.

MAESTRO (CONT'D)

That's more like it. Okay. Now,
let's take a break and I want you
back in 15 minutes.

Moans echo throughout the stage. Even the security guard in the back of the hall groans.

MAESTRO (CONT'D)

This is the last piece for tonight.
I promise. In 15 minutes.

INT. BASEMENT - CARNEGIE HALL - CONTINUOUS

Wendy sits alone in the basement rehearsal studio playing her cello. The sound she was producing was a far cry from the sounds she was producing before.

She starts and stops, and groans, having difficulty with a particular piece. She slaps her thighs when Trevor enters.

TREVOR

I remember that temper.

WENDY

Trevor, my God! What are you doing
here? How did you find me?

TREVOR

I couldn't sleep.

They meet in the center of the room in an awkward embrace.

WENDY

How did you find me?

TREVOR

A guy at the desk said you were
rehearsing downstairs. I listened
for the cello and saw the baseball
cap. Having trouble with the piece?

WENDY

The Maestro wants a tempo change.
I'm trying to improvise a little.

TREVOR

Ah, yes. The maestro! Heard he's
one hell of a great guy. Let you
stay with him for a while.

WENDY

Please, Trevor. Don't make this any
more difficult than it is. There's
a lot you don't understand.

TREVOR

How could I understand? Except for
our chance meeting yesterday, I
haven't heard a word from you in
two years. My calls and letters
were ignored. Birthdays and
holidays? Not a peep. Hell, Wendy,
you couldn't even let me know you
got pregnant?

WENDY

This isn't the time, Trevor.

TREVOR

You're right. Two years ago
would've been better.

WENDY

Stop with the tone, okay. Don't use
that tone with me?

TREVOR

I'm in my room yesterday and my
mother bombards me with a thousand
questions. She asks me if I got you
pregnant. I'm in the twilight zone
wondering what the hell she was
talking about. What universe was I
in? So, excuse me if I seem upset.

WENDY

You'd better go.

TREVOR

Sorry I bothered you before your big gig. I just thought we had something important to discuss.

Trevor turns to leave.

WENDY

Wait.

(pats the adjacent stool)

I'm sorry I didn't call you.

Trevor comes back. Sits on the stool.

TREVOR

I would've been there for you, just like before you left for college.

WENDY

I know. And that's the very reason why I didn't call. You would've married me right away even if the baby wasn't yours. Both of us would have paid the price years later.

Trevor shakes his head and reaches in his pocket and takes out a man's wrist watch.

TREVOR

Your prom gift to me? Remember?

WENDY

Yes. I remember.

TREVOR

You're lucky it's still in one piece. I almost ripped this thing apart more than once. I've kept it because it represents what could've been. I was content, more or less, before yesterday. I was even ready to find someone new, but... but...

WENDY

It'd be better to find someone else, Trevor.

TREVOR

I gave it a try, actually.

WENDY

That's good. Keep trying.

TREVOR

I have. Her name is Sharon. She loved to shop. She saw this evening dress that caught her eye one night as we passed by the store window. I thought of you, so I kissed her right there and... Well, I opened my eyes and saw it wasn't you. We sort of rubbed lips. She smiled in the middle of it, like she was doing me a favor.

WENDY

I've learned that when things end badly, you move on. It's not hard to figure out.

TREVOR

It didn't end badly for her. She bought the dress.

They both laugh a little, then an awkward silence ensues.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

So, I'm just a fond memory, huh?

WENDY

I'm not the same person. I don't have the same feelings.

TREVOR

All I expect are some answers.

WENDY

What will that change?

TREVOR

You're right. But what right do you have to make decisions for me? That could've been my child, right?

WENDY

What rights did I have when I was thrown on the ground? You can't understand the darkness that hides in my soul. Sometimes, when I'm in the subway, or in a crowded elevator, I smell his sweat and my stomach turns. I feel his weight pressing into me and I can't breathe. That horror won't leave. Until it does...

TREVOR

So, the lesson about moving on applies just to me? I'm sorry. I shouldn't've said that. Listen, Wendy, I would've been there for you, is all I'm saying.

WENDY

Yes. I remember your allegiance, but would you have married me if I told you I was pregnant? Out of pity, perhaps? I was too broken, Trevor. I didn't have a direction. I didn't know what to do.

TREVOR

Well, you've worked it all out. I'm happy for you.

The static on the LOUDSPEAKER interrupts them, and then a voice comes barreling through.

SPEAKER VOICE

Five minute call. Musicians back on stage in five minutes.

WENDY

Rehearsal's up again. I have to go.

TREVOR

Wendy, for God's sake, don't leave me like this. What do I do?

WENDY

I can't tell you what to do. Two years of silence is unforgivable and I will apologize to you and my mother for that, but not right now. No apologies today!

As Wendy began to collect her things--

WENDY (CONT'D)

I'm not asking for forgiveness, Trevor. I've come too far to start feeling sorry for myself now. I concentrate on my music and I move forward. I suggest you do the same.

TREVOR

This isn't fair.

WENDY

Fair!? Ha. My rape isn't fair. My mother's agoraphobia isn't fair. My solo isn't fair to the drummer who wants one as well.

TREVOR

So, that's it? It's over between us? Officially.

WENDY

I didn't say that.

TREVOR

Well, you don't have to worry about me, Wendy. I'll get through this. Being alone is something I've gotten good at. But before I leave, I need to tell you something.

WENDY

Make it quick. I have to go.

TREVOR

Last night, after my mom demanded to know if I was a father to your baby, she told me my father isn't dead. Can you believe that?

(MORE)

TREVOR (CONT'D)

He got injured in the Granada conflict, but he didn't die. He's alive somewhere and obviously never wanted a son in his life. So, you run back to Boston after your solo here, and go feel sorry for yourself. You're not the only one in this world who rejected a son.

Wendy covers her face and sobs, not seeing that Trevor places the wrist-watch on a music stand and leaves. While sobbing through her hands--

WENDY

I'm so sorry, Trevor. I never meant to push you away. I was just scared I'd lose you forever if the baby wasn't yours. What if it wasn't yours and I told you? What if it was yours and you said...?

She uncovers her face and sees that Trevor has left.

INT. DEBBIE'S PARLOR - DAY

Kate and Pat enter Debbie's beauty parlor with bags of necessities. Kate has a bag filled with office supplies and starts putting them away. She drops an item.

PAT

Will you be quiet, for crying out loud. Debbie's sleeping.

Kate starts putting away the items more gingerly.

PAT (CONT'D)

She took a sleeping pill. She'll be up soon. When she comes down let's not talk about Wendy or the abortion. Let's be upbeat today.

KATE

Let's talk about that gorgeous hunk who came in a week ago. He just wanted a shampoo.

(MORE)

KATE (CONT'D)

The guy who was looking to rent by Yankee Stadium so he could watch the World Series from his window, remember?

PAT

How could I forget? He was a younger Sean Connery with bushy hair. You stammered like a school girl. Got all flushed and mumbly.

KATE

At least I wasn't drooling all over myself like a puppy-dog, like you.

PAT

I was not. But did you notice his big hands? And you know what they say about men with big hands?

Kate's inquisitive look gives her away. She doesn't know.

PAT (CONT'D)

You see? This is why we don't have sex talks. Your sex life is like you owning a dachshund.

KATE

I don't own a dachshund.

PAT

Exactly.

(takes a sip from her cup)

Ew! This tea is not doing anything for me. Follow me.

Kate grabs her purse and follows Pat outside.

EXT. DEBBIE'S BACK YARD

In the backyard, Debbie a swing set, a table and a fence.

Pat takes off the top of the fence post, reaches down, pulls out a bottle of booze, and walks to the table.

KATE

How long has that been there?

PAT

Since the Yankees won the pennant
two years ago. Want some?

Pat fills her cup, takes a swig and passes the cup to Kate,
who takes a sip then pulls out a joint from her purse.

PAT (CONT'D)

Is that what I think it is?

KATE

My next door neighbor grows his
own. I don't do this very often.

Kate lights it up, takes a 'hit' and hands the joint to Pat.

They exchange the joint and cup.

KATE (CONT'D)

May I ask you something without you
getting upset?

PAT

Go for it.

KATE

How can you stay attached to a man
you've only seen once in 30 years?

PAT

(thinking)

The memories make me feel good, I
guess.

(takes another toke)

Oh, who am I kidding? I never came
to closure with him emotionally. I
haven't allowed myself to feel for
a man ever since Joey. I wanted us
to marry, Kate. So much.

KATE

He probably loved you too much to
get married. He didn't want to make
you a widow if he never came back.

As they exchange the cup and joint, they start to get tipsy.

PAT

I would've taken that risk. I don't know why he couldn't.

KATE

I bet if you had told him you were pregnant, he would've married you to provide for Trevor if something did happen to him in Granada.

PAT

You could be right, Kate. I messed up, didn't I? Screwed it all up. Let's not talk about him.

Pat pours more booze into the cup, the raises it and--

PAT (CONT'D)

To your bingo man.

(takes a sip)

Come on, Kate! Why don't you just go for it?

KATE

I don't know how to just 'go for it'. I'm not like you, Pat.

PAT

Your man needs encouragement. Maybe he needs the fourth move.

Kate didn't know what to say, so she kept silent.

PAT (CONT'D)

Okay, the first move is tongue in the mouth. Second move is take off your bra. Third move is Clinton sex. You know, cunnilingus.

KATE

Oh, my cousin works for Aer Lingus.

They both laugh, and they both take a swig.

KATE (CONT'D)

I'm just not good with men, Pat. Every damn time I feel something, you know, the "twang", it never works out. I can't seem to survive the courtship. At first I lose my power, but when it eventually returns it just seems to get in the way. Like the time I was being courted by Tim, the lawyer. That could've amounted to something.

PAT

A lawyer. Wow! So, what happened?

KATE

Well, we dated for a while. Once my estrogen levels were normal, my psychic abilities returned. I did a reading on him and found out he was overcharging a client. When I called him on it he freaked out because he didn't know how to handle me after that. So, he split. I never saw him again.

PAT

So, mums the word with this guy.

Kate nods, then--

KATE

Oh, Pat. I don't know what to do. What should I do?

PAT

Relax. Be yourself. You're a good-looking woman, although you should dress better. Accent your assets.

KATE

When you compliment me, which is not often, mind you, you always give me a shit-sandwich.

PAT

What's that supposed to mean?

KATE

You compliment me a couple of times
and stick then shit in the middle.

DEBBIE

Shit! You've been using that word a
lot lately. You're usually very
lady-like.

KATE

Oh, Kate, 'you're so good-looking -
you dress like crap - you're very
lady-like.' Shit sandwich.

PAT

I didn't say you were 'sooo' good
looking. I said you were good
looking. If you were 'sooo' good
looking, men would be tripping over
themselves to ask you out.

A noise from the house startled Pat.

PAT (CONT'D)

I hear Debbie coming. Let's get rid
of this stuff.

Pat runs to the fence post and jams the bottle back in. Kate
tosses the roach, fans the air, and Pat and Kate enters the
office just as Debbie does.

DEBBIE

Good morning, ladies. Or is it
afternoon?

PAT

I don't know. It's hard to tell
when you're having fun.

DEBBIE

Okay. I've cried half the night, so
I'm not having fun, and I have no
more tears left. But I'm better
this morning. You don't have to tip-
toe around me. Understood? Pat, I
assume you told Kate everything.

(Responding to Pat's nod)

(MORE)

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Good. Now I have something to say. I've decided to go tonight. I want to see Wendy's performance. I'll let the chips fall where they may. If I die, I die.

PAT

(After a long pause)

Good. I'll take you. But if I drive you I'll have to tie your hands and feet to the armrest, and put duct tape over your mouth.

DEBBIE

I promise I won't touch anything. I'll just sing and hum. And you can wear earplugs.

PAT

Good. I can't do another day like yesterday.

DEBBIE

Neither can I.

(pause)

Good. There's nothing left to say right now, so let's try and..

Debbie searches for the right word.

KATE

Make merry.

PAT

Make merry. What are we, in 18th Century England?

DEBBIE

Yes, I like that. Let's 'make merry'. Let's keep things low on the Richter Scale today, okay?

(looks at Pat)

You look like you've been drinking. Have you been drinking? And that smell. What is that smell?

PAT
Yes, I've been drinking.

Pat looks at Kate who is laughing.

PAT (CONT'D)
(pointing at Kate)
She's been smoking pot.

KATE
So has she.

Debbie threw both hands up in disbelief.

PAT
You should join us.

DEBBIE
Just sober up. Both of you. This is
a business, not Woodstock.

The three fall silent. Then--

KATE
I think I want to get my realty
license.

PAT
Really. People are not going to buy
homes from someone who smells like
kitty-poop all the time.

KATE
Don't start, Pat.

PAT
Then stick to what you do best.
Answer phones, poop-head.

DEBBIE
Ladies, please stop your bickering.

The doorbell rings. After a brief pause--

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
Is someone going to get the door?

The doorbell rings again. Pat and Kate stare at each other.

PAT

(to Kate)

You're the office flunkie, so answer the door. Ooo. You don't know who it is? That can mean only one thing.

The doorbell rings again.

DEBBIE

I'm counting to three and if somebody isn't hauling ass to the front door, you'll both lose a day's pay, I swear. One ...

PAT

One-and-a-half.

DEBBIE

Two...

PAT

You better get it, Kate, or I swear, I'll sneak in your basement and sterilize your cats.

KATE

You do that and I'll tell your gynecologist that you're thinking of leaving her because her cheek wart is driving you crazy.

DEBBIE

Three...

KATE

Excuse me. I have to get the door.

INT. FRONT DOOR VESTIBULE AREA

Kate opens the front door and is met by DAN who stands there holding a magnificent display of flowers.

DAN

These will need water right away.

KATE

They're heavenly, Dan. The colors are dazzling. Your arrangement?

DAN

Yes. I bought them with the bingo money I won the other night.

KATE

Nice. Thank you. Say, how would like to go to see my boss's daughter play in the Boston Philharmonic tomorrow night at Carnegie Hall? I'll buy if you fly.

DAN

I'd love to. She's an artist, aye? I'm sort of an artist too, you know. I wrote an article for the Mystery Writer's Magazine.

KATE

Really. Who's your favorite author?

DAN

That's a no brainer. Agatha Christie, of course.

(responding to Kate nod)

Ms. Devine, tell me something about yourself.

KATE

There's not much to tell. I have a stable of cats. Love to read plays.

DAN

What's your favorite play?

KATE

Cyrano de Bergerac! The romance and noble sentiment in that play always give me chills.

Dan moves closer and plants a Rhett Butler kind of kiss on Kate's lips. He then nibbles on her neck.

Pat appears out of nowhere and--

PAT

Okay. Stop it, you two.

KATE

He's so romantic, isn't he?

PAT

Romantic my ass. He's gnawing at your neck like it's a hot dog. A little advice, Kate. Better practice safe sex with this guy.

KATE

We've already discussed that.

Kate elbowed Dan in his ribs as if to say, 'Follow my lead'.

KATE (CONT'D)

Dan is going to install handrails around my bed.

PAT

Funny! On a more important note, where did you hide the conditioner?

DAN

You're busy. I'll go. I'll pick you up at six, tomorrow.

Kate reaches into her pocket and withdrew a business card and hands it to Dan.

KATE

Here. My address is on there.

Dan takes the card and leaves.

INT. DEBBIE'S BEAUTY PARLOR - NEXT DAY

Pat is taking the rollers out of Mrs. Hennessy hair.

PAT

Debbie's upstairs now getting ready for that Carnegie thing. I'm already to go. You like.

Pat models her dress to Mrs. Hennessey.

MRS. HENNESSEY

Very nice.

PAT

Sorry I don't have the time to give you the full treatment today. I'm taking her there.

MRS HENNESSY

(as she rises from chair)

That's okay. I'm just glad you had the time to do what you did. Have a good time. Too-da-loo.

And with that she pays Pat and leaves.

Pat sits and reads a magazine while she waits.

PAT

(yelling)

Let's get a move on it, Debbie.
Carnegie Hall is waiting.

Just then a man with a mangled face comes in. It's Joey.

JOEY

I'm sorry, I used to live around here, so you think I wouldn't be so lost. I'm looking for the donut shop that used to be around here. I saw the sign and the lady who just left didn't know and said you might be able to help me. Your voice, though. You sound like someone I used to know.

Pat slowly rises from her chair.

A slow realization overcomes Joey.

JOEY (CONT'D)

I didn't know... I... I... Gotta go.

Joey backs up, as if he's going to run.

PAT

Wait! I need to tell you... You're a father, Joey. You have a son.

Joey hesitate on his exit.

JOEY

No. That's impossible. I didn't
hear you say that. I can't do this.

Joey bolts away just as Debbie enters almost knocking her
over. Pat runs to Debbie.

DEBBIE

Whatever did you say to that man?

PAT

Debbie! That was Joey. He came in
here by accident. He wanted
directions.

DEBBIE

Joey, as in Trevor's father?

Pat nods and they both hear the sound of the car peeling out.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Well, what are you waiting for?
Jump in your car and go after him.

PAT

But what about you. I'm supposed to
take you to the concert.

DEBBIE

Don't worry about me. I'll find a
way. I'll call Kate on her cell or
take a cab. Or something. Now, go
before you lose him again. Just go!
You'll spend the rest of your life
regretting it if you don't.

As she leaves--

PAT

Don't forget to Wendy's pocketbook.
She left it here yesterday.

DEBBIE

I won't forget. Now go.

Pat kisses her, and leaves.

Debbie runs to her desk and picks up her phone and dials.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Hello. I need a taxi. Quick...

She listens for a couple of seconds then--

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

World Series, my ass. I can't wait that long. Never mind.

Debbie hangs up, and reaches over to the recorder, and turns it on.

TAPE PLAYER (V.O.)

Disease and illness are preventable afflictions when your primary response to a stressful situation is anxiety. You need to relax physically and mentally...

Debbie turns off the Tape Player and dials another number.

DEBBIE

Damn you, Kate. Pick up. Pick up.

After a couple of seconds, she hangs up.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Dear God, not the bus.

Debbie stands and paces back and forth. She looks to the ceiling and--

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Dear God, help me.

As she says this, Wendy enters, unannounced and unnoticed.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

What am I going to tell Wendy? No...
No. I gotta go to Carnegie. I'll
take the bus. That's what I'll do.
I'll take the bus.

Debbie quickly turns and sees Wendy with her hand over her mouth ready to cry.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

I wanted it to be a surprise.

WENDY

I don't know what to say, Mom.
After thirty years...

DEBBIE

Yes. Yes. Now don't make a big deal
of it. Let's go or you'll be late.

Wendy spots her pocketbook on Pat's desk and grabs it.

WENDY

I left my pocketbook here,
yesterday. That's why I came here
first. Come on. My taxi is outside.
We'll take it together.

DEBBIE

No taxis. Too close to the ground.
Things speed by too fast. The bus
is better. Less claustrophobic.

WENDY

I don't have time to argue, Mom.
I'm going to miss first call. The
taxi's right outside. Let's go.

Debbie runs into the vestibule area, retrieves her shawl and
an umbrella from the alcove area. She raises the umbrella.

DEBBIE

In case it rains.

She opens the front door just as a car whizzes by. (SPFX) A
kaleidoscope of images causes her to falter. She slams the
door shut, then opens it again and everything appears normal.

WENDY

See. Everything's going to be okay.
It's nice outside. Let's go.

Wendy escorts Debbie to the taxi while Debbie moans and
groans all the way.

INT. TAXI CAB - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Wendy slides in the back seat and pulls Debbie in next to her. Wendy reaches over and slams the door. To Debbie, the sound is like cell doors closing.

WENDY

(to the cab driver)

Please hurry. I'm going to be late.

After a brief period of traveling in the taxi--

DEBBIE

The bus is better. The bus is better. The bus is better..

Debbie sees a church and grabs her shawl and umbrella and bolts out of the taxi while it stops for a red light.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE CHURCH

Debbie stumbles but makes it up the steps to the front door of the church. She opens the doors and goes in.

EXT. TAXI - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Wendy takes money from her purse and hands it to the driver.

WENDY

If we're not back in five minutes,
then go. Keep the change.

INT. CHURCH - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The front doors of the church open and Wendy walks in.

WENDY

I haven't got time for this Mom.
You win. We'll take the bus.

Sobbing noises emanate from the confessional booth.

Wendy sees the umbrella leaning against the booth. She heads for the confessional and enters the center chamber.

INT. CENTER BOOTH OF THE CONFESSIONAL - CONTINUOUS

Wendy enters the center chamber and leans toward the shadow in the confessional. They talk in whispers.

WENDY

Mom... stop.

DEBBIE (O.S.)

I'm sorry, Sweetheart. I can't help this. I know you don't believe me, but I really can't help it.

WENDY

It doesn't matter what I believe. We just need to get focused so we can go to the bus stop.

DEBBIE (O.S.)

See. You don't care, do you?

WENDY

I don't have time for this circular crap, Mother.

(silence)

Okay. You want absolution. I absolve you from your sins. Say three Our Fathers and three Hail Marys. Now let's go.

DEBBIE (O.S.)

What are you doing?

WENDY

I'm giving you absolution for your sins.

DEBBIE (O.S.)

But you're not even Catholic.

WENDY

Forgiveness is a human trait, Mom, not a religious one.

DEBBIE (O.S.)

Then tell me to drink two cups of arsenic. But don't tell me to say the rosary.

There was silence, then a groan from Wendy.

DEBBIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You don't sound too forgiving.

WENDY

What do you want me to say, Mom?

DEBBIE (O.S.)

Tell me you love me and it doesn't matter if I go to Carnegie Hall.

Debbie starts to sob again, and the echo of Wendy's scream is followed by total silence, which accentuates the echo of that scream throughout the church.

DEBBIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Why did you do that?

WENDY

Why is the sky blue, Mommy? Why is there evil in the world, Mommy? Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people? I suppose you wish I were more grateful, don't you?

DEBBIE (O.S.)

Yes. That would help. Gratefulness is a quality that you're missing.

WENDY

(thinking)

I can't stifle this thing that happens inside me, no matter how much I try. It's like someone's stoking coals in my soul. A chemical pumps through my body and I can't look at you without wanting to scream. You should understand that feeling, right?

DEBBIE (O.S.)

Yeah, well, I'm sorry you feel that way.

WENDY

I bare my soul to you, and that's all you want to say, some psycho-babble your doctor tells you to say when things aren't going exactly the way you want it to go.

DEBBIE (O.S.)

You act as if I'm responsible for what someone else did to you. Well, I'm sorry, Wendy. As terrible as this may sound, you're not the only one who has hardships.

(sighs)

Okay. I'm ready, now.

And with that Debbie's confessional door flies open and she bolts from the confessional and out of the church. She has the shawl over her shoulders but leaves the umbrella behind.

WENDY

I bet Norman Bates' mother was never like this.

Wendy exits the confessional, grabs the umbrella that Debbie left behind and begins tapping the umbrella's tip on the floor as she walks out and sings--

DEBBIE

*Zip a-dee-doo-dah, zip-a-dee-ay
My, oh, my, what a wonderful day.*

EXT. CHURCH STEPS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Debbie reaches the bottom steps of the church when Wendy exits the building. Debbie tightens the shawl around her shoulders, and then runs towards the bus stop.

As Wendy gives chase, she sees the taxi has left and--

WENDY

You can't get good help these days.

ON DEBBIE

All the movements, sounds and lights hit Debbie at once, so she stops and freezes in the middle of the street. Cars honk, which causes Debbie to shiver with fear.

Debbie bolts back to the church side of the street. Wendy approaches and--

WENDY (CONT'D)

Close your eyes.

Debbie closes her eyes. A car passes by and the Doppler Effect of the engine sound starts out loud but ends in a whisper. Debbie's panic subsides.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Okay, the car is gone. Now look both ways. Anything coming?

DEBBIE

No. But wait.

(looks skyward)

Dear God, you get me through this and I'll never use another four-letter word. I promise.

WENDY

Didn't Nana ever tell you shouldn't make promises you can't keep.

Debbie jumps at a shadow.

WENDY (CONT'D)

It's okay, Mom. They're just shadows. The bus stop is only a couple of blocks down the street.

DEBBIE

What am I going to do when the bus moves and things go flying by the window? I'll get dizzy. I'll go ballistic. I'll faint.

WENDY

You'll close your eyes and take deep breaths is what you'll do.

(MORE)

WENDY (CONT'D)

It's like giving birth. Oh, that's right. You don't want to go there.

Debbie approaches a corner and hears people talking, and she stops walking. She hears voices no one else can hear except her. The scenery is as if it were right out of a Hitchcock movie. To Debbie, the voices got stronger, more menacing.

The voices seem to be coming from everywhere. Maybe they are voices of muggers or thieves in the night.

Debbie grabs the umbrella from Wendy and readies herself, as if it were a weapon.

DEBBIE

Wendy, I hear voices.

WENDY

What are they saying to you?

DEBBIE

They're not in my head. They're real. Don't you hear them?

Wendy saw a bus stop at the bus stop where they are headed.

WENDY

Damn Sam. I'm going to be late.

The voices get louder, and more menacing as they get closer to the corner. The voices sound wicked and horror appears on Debbie's face.

DEBBIE

Stinkbug... Stinkbug.

At the corner of the street, Debbie jumps ahead and looks, as if she was going to see the Phantom of the Opera, or someone like that. Instead, there is nothing.

WENDY

See. It's all in your head.

Debbie screams at the top of her lungs, drops her umbrella, throws her shawl over her face and runs across the street. Wendy picks up the umbrella, then walks briskly after her. Debbie continues walking with the shawl on her head.

When Wendy catches up to her, she removes the shawl.

DEBBIE

This is so hard.

WENDY

Let's just focus, please.

Wendy hands the umbrella back to Debbie and they continue walking to the bus stop. The engine sound of a motor scooter traveling down the street unnerves Debbie. To her it sounds like a jet engine.

Debbie looks up and sees a plane high above her in the sky. She closes her eyes, then opens them and sees the plane again. This time it is flying directly overhead and she ducks as it roars past her at the same time a car passes by.

Debbie goes into a full fledged anxiety attack and falls, then gets up screaming. She runs into a Bag Lady and they both go flying. Debbie quickly gets up and points the umbrella at the Bag Lady, as if it were a sword.

BAG LADY

(Dustin Hoffman voice)

Hey, I was walking here.

DEBBIE

(Clint Eastwood voice)

Go ahead. Make my day.

Debbie reacts to the sounds of the cars zooming by as if they were cannons being shot on a battle field. In response to the noise, Debbie throws the shawl over her head and hugs the Bag Lady who tries to free herself from Debbie's grip but can't.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Wendy. Wendy. Where are you?

Wendy peels Debbie off the Bag Lady and stands between them and prevents an altercation.

WENDY

I'm right here, Mom. I know this is difficult, but it's only a block to the bus stop. You're almost there.

BAG LADY

Hey, this is my territory. Go find
your own street.

Wendy holds her mother's arm and they gingerly continue forward with the shawl over Debbie's head. Debbie peeks out a few times to see where she is. The Bag Lady follows.

DEBBIE

I can't see. I can't see. And don't
tell me to take the shawl off.
Things move too fast, if I take it
off.

WENDY

Then walk slower.

Debbie removes the shawl from her head and walks slower.

WENDY (CONT'D)

We're at the bus stop.

The Bag Lady stops a few feet away.

DEBBIE

We made it.

Wendy sits down on the bench at the bus stop and pulls Debbie down on the bench with her.

WENDY

You did good, Mom. Proud of you.
So, now we just wait for the bus.
It'll take us to the bus terminal
in the city and from there we'll
take a taxi and go to the hall.

Debbie drops her umbrella and the Bag Lady picks it up.

DEBBIE

Give it to me.

BAG LADY

Finders, keepers.

Debbie and Wendy rise from the bench and Wendy faces the Bag Lady who points the umbrella at Debbie.

BAG LADY (CONT'D)

What's the matter with you?

DEBBIE

I could ask you the same question.

The Bag Lady points the umbrella at Debbie just as a car zooms by. Debbie goes to one knee and covers her ears.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Too fast. Things move too fast.
Everything gets ... discombobulated.

BAG LADY

Dis-coom-boob-ulated. Oo! Aren't we
the grown-up person using big words
that twist the tongue.

DEBBIE

Give me my umbrella back.

BAG LADY

You want it back? Come and get it.

WENDY

Mom! It's not going to rain
tonight. I'll get you another
umbrella. Leave her be.

Debbie sits back down and throws the shawl over her head.

BAG LADY

(to Wendy)

What's her problem?

WENDY

She doesn't get out very often.
What's your problem, lady?

The Bag Lady pokes Debbie in the arm with the umbrella.

BAG LADY

Hey, dis-coom-boob-ulated lady?

(pokes again)

You sick in the head, or something?

(pokes again)

Hey, I'm talkin' to you.

(MORE)

BAG LADY (CONT'D)

(pokes again)

Wuts the matter with you?

Debbie pounds her fists into her lap like a crazy lady.

As the Bag Lady goes to poke Debbie again, Wendy intercepts the umbrella and a tug-of-war begins. Wendy yanks the umbrella out of the Bag Lady's hand and whacks her with it.

Meanwhile, Debbie tries to get up, but the Bag Lady pushes her back down with her foot. Wendy grabs the Bag Lady by her collar and the Bag Lady growls (improvise).

WENDY

Pipe down, lady. You sit here and be a good little girl, or I'll take your eyeballs out with a corkscrew and stuff them up your butt.

The Bag Lady sits down, and remains quiet the whole time before the bus arrives.

INT. BUS - EARLY EVENING - CONTINUOUS

A fat lady sits next to the bag lady pinning her in her seat the entire ride to the NYC bus terminal.

LATER

Debbie runs off the bus, avoiding any confrontation between herself and the bus driver, or the bag lady.

INT. BUS TERMINAL -

Wendy chases Debbie down the stairs. Once they get to the second floor, Debbie bolts to the woman's room and ducks into a stall. A clicking sound indicates she has locked the door.

WOMAN'S REST ROOM

Wendy follows her into the rest room. She looks around and doesn't see Debbie - only closed stall. She checks the closed stall. It's locked. Wendy looks at her watch.

WENDY

Mom, are you going to come out any time soon?

DEBBIE (O.S.)

Can't go if you're standing there.

WENDY

Well, I want you to know that I called Kate on her cell. She's coming here and will take you to the hall while I go to Carnegie by myself. I should at least make intermission is my guess. My solo is in the second half, anyway, so I think I'm okay. I also wanted to let you know that I'm leaving.

BUS TERMINAL

Wendy comes out of the Rest Room and sits on the bench close by. She waits.

Kate arrives.

WENDY

Oh, thank God you're here.

KATE

She's in there?

WENDY

Yes. And I have to go, I'm sorry, but I'm in a hurry.

KATE

Go, go. Intermission is in a couple of minutes.

WENDY

I don't know you well, but... Thanks.

KATE

You're welcome. Now, go. Go! We'll have plenty of time to connect. You'll make your solo if you hurry.

REST ROOM

Kate enters and goes right to the closed stall and sits in a chair next to the stall. Kate fumbles with her jacket and pulls out a flask.

KATE (CONT'D)

You in there, Debbie. You want a hit? It's whiskey.

After a short pause Debbie slowly comes out of the stall and grabs the flask and takes a healthy drink. She hands the flask back to Kate who also takes a healthy swig.

DEBBIE

Thanks. I can't go. I'm too scared.

KATE

Come on, Deb. You gotten this far, another mile or two won't matter. We can take a cab home, a bus, whatever you want. I don't want to miss the second half. So... Bye.

As Kate starts to leave, Debbie pulls her back, grabs the flask and takes another swig. She hands the flask back to Kate who also takes another swig.

KATE (CONT'D)

If you want some more, follow me.

Kate turns to see that the woman's door is fully opened.

DEBBIE

Open doors scare me.

KATE

Me too. Let's face our fears together. Join me in a toast to our daughters.

Kate takes another swig.

DEBBIE

What? You have a daughter?

KATE

Yup. And today's her birthday. To Wendy and Dorothy.

Kate takes a swig: Debbie does the same.

DEBBIE

I'd like to meet her.

KATE

In due time. Let's go.
Let's talk while we walk.

And they both leave through the opened door.

DEBBIE

What? You and Dorothy aren't close?

KATE

we are. In fact, she's with me all
the time.

They slow-step their way to the center of the bus depot where they must work their way through the crowd of people to the escalator and to the main floor. While they do this--

KATE (CONT'D)

You look confused. Let me explain.
My little girl, Dorothy, she had a
sparkle in her eyes that told you
she was going to be someone special
when she grew up: a writer, or
perhaps a doctor, or a philosopher,
someone worth knowing. She was so
inquisitive, a thousand questions
about the simplest things. I saw
her once gently pick up an ant
between her fingers. She put it
real close to her face and said
(using a gravelly voice)

Wow!

(back to her normal voice)

and she stared at it for minutes on
end. When she finally put it down,
it scurried away, better off for
its encounter. She was that intense
sometimes. She'd look into my eyes
and see straight into my heart and
I'd be forced to say,

(in a gravelly voice)

Wow!

(back to her normal voice)

(MORE)

KATE (CONT'D)

I would looked at her and I wondered who or what this child was who could see so far into my soul. A smile from her gave me the confidence that God lived. When she started talking, there was no end to her questions. Her adventure became my adventure. She'd look in wonderment at the birds in the tree branches and demand to know their names. 'Wutsdat'... 'Wutsdat', she would always ask. About everything. Sticks, leaves, birds, cement, cars, the wind against her face. She'd wander off after anything that caught her eye, or didn't stay in one place, those precious eyes that saw such a fascinating world we all take for granted like a butterfly, or a rainbow.

They are on the main floor and Debbie tries to keep up and catch every word Kate is saying.

Kate stops and they exchange the flask again.

KATE (CONT'D)

One day I was sitting on the couch, exhausted from trying to keep pace with her as she darted from room to room. She was wearing a pair of pink sneakers with pale blue laces. Those sneakers were so worn from all the miles she ran in them. Anyway, unless the laces were firmly tied, Dorothy would put up a fuss and sit on the floor saying, 'Pleeeese, Pleeeese' until they were fastened. That day I found myself falling asleep just as she tugged on my sleeve to tie up the lace on her left sneaker that had become undone. The room was barricaded and I was so sleepy. I tied the lace, watched her turn on the TV, and I fell asleep.

(MORE)

KATE (CONT'D)

But the child-gate was loose. And the kitchen door was unlocked. And the street was... busy. And my child with her inquisitive mind and voice calling out 'Wutsdat... Wutsdat' to a slumbering mother, found her way into the unknown. That's the day God died for me."

Debbie doesn't realize she hustled her way through a crowd of busy people bumping her way to the bottom floor of the terminal and well on her way to the 8th Avenue line of taxis.

KATE (CONT'D)

For years I thought about the shoelace I tied and the gate I left loose. Drove myself insane with grief and blame.

DEBBIE

Sweet Jesus! I thought I had it bad.

Debbie grabs hold of Kate's wrist.

KATE

No offense taken.

DEBBIE

What do I do, Kate? Wendy won't forgive me.

KATE

Agh, forgiveness? Hardest thing to do in life. Spent years seeking it. You can't forgive, especially yourself, unless you change something inside yourself.

Kate pounds on her chest.

KATE (CONT'D)

After Dorothy was gone I couldn't move, went nowhere, saw no one. Dorothy's father died in a car accident before she was born, so... no help there.

(MORE)

KATE (CONT'D)

Anyway, one morning after she died an emaciated alley cat crept into my kitchen and wouldn't leave. Poor thing was starving and I had to do something. So I left the house to buy some milk and when I got back the cat had curled up asleep between Dorothy's pink sneakers. Dorothy was trying to tell me something.

DEBBIE

You think Dorothy forgave you?

KATE

It's not about forgiveness, Debbie. It's about acceptance. Accept your daughter for who she is and you for who you are. Do that and then you'll have the heart to forgive yourself, and once you do that, you'll be able to forgive her.

They reach the 8th Avenue exit and the line of cabs outside.

DEBBIE

Wait! Before we go outside. You're the psychic. Tell me if I make it in one piece.

KATE

Yes. You make it in one piece. But it's a bit of a walk. One more test. You have to take a cab to finish this.

DEBBIE

Oh, good grief. Is this day ever going to end?

EXT. CARNEGIE HALL - SUNSET - CONTINUOUS

Trevor comes outside the front doors of Carnegie hall just as Joey meanders slowly towards him. Wendy comes buzzing through like a chain saw.

WENDY

(to Trevor)

You coming out because of
intermission?

(responding to his nod)

Good. We'll talk later.

Wendy bolts inside. Trevor stretches a bit when--

JOEY

Excuse me. Did you say intermission
just started?

TREVOR

Yes. You missed about half of the
show. Best part is coming up,
though. My ex-fiancé... I guess I can
say that... She is doing a solo. That
was her you just saw. Where are you
sitting, may I ask?

JOEY

I don't actually have a ticket. I
know it's a sold out house, but
standing room is fine.

TREVOR

Well, this must be your lucky day.
The guy sitting next to me is a
doctor and he got called out on an
emergency.

JOEY

Thank you. I have a friend inside
as well. We met today after a very
long time apart. I didn't handle it
very well I'm afraid. She followed
me in her car. Caught up with me at
a stop light. Motioned for me to
pull over, but I didn't. She yelled
at me to come here tonight then I
sped away. I was afraid, I guess.
I'm here to apologize, and make
things right if I can. She's in the
audience, somewhere. I thought I'd
surprise her.

TREVOR

It's that kind of a night, I guess. My soloist friend was surprised her mother showed up. Long story. You from around here?

JOEY

Born and raised in Brooklyn.

TREVOR

Me too.

An awkward silence ensues. Finally--

JOEY

The soloist. She's a close friend?

TREVOR

We were engaged once. I've been trying to get our relationship back on track. I'm sorry. I shouldn't be so personal.

JOEY

Oh, no, no. That's okay. Really, it's okay. I came here to settle a piece of the past as well. I let a relationship die a long time ago because I felt... unworthy, I guess.

Just then, a buzzer sounds indicating intermission is over and everyone is to return to their seats.

They enter the Hall just as Kate and Debbie step out of the cab. Kate pays the cab driver then turns to Debbie and--

KATE

I can tell you more stories. I got a slew of them, like why I named two of our cats Enki-Du and Gilgamesh, and how they terrorize any mice that make the unfortunate decision to visit our kitchen. And then there was Missy. She scratched her way through the screen door and it took me five days to find her. And then there were the cutest munchkin kittens under my seat of the bus...

Kate stops talking because she sees the anxiety in Debbie's face.

KATE (CONT'D)

What's the matter.

DEBBIE

You go in. I'll stay out here.

With that, Debbie listens to the music by the doorway as the orchestra plays The William Tell Overture. The music stops abruptly and tapping sounds follow as if the Maestro is banging his baton against the music stand.

MAESTRO (O.C.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, please put your hands together for a wonderful Cellist doing her very first solo tonight. Please welcome Wendy Hammel who will play... Well, you guess what's she's playing.

Debie leans against the wall, listens, and gets emotional. She then takes a deep breath and vanishes into the hall.

THE END