

THE EULOGY

Screenplay by

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INFINITE RAIN

pouring from the sky. Wind whips a PRIVATE PROPERTY sign.

HEADLIGHTS

approach from a distance slicing the wall of precipitation as a line of cars led by a black hearse stops in front of

IRON GATES

bound with chain, padlocked more than once.

A DRIVER steps out of the hearse and under an umbrella, strides to the gate where he unfastens numerous locks. The gates swing open.

Once again, the cars roll into formation as the funeral procession snakes its way through

THE MORGAN ESTATE

Vines choke an old orchard of leafless trees.

A Victorian mansion sits off to the side, massive front porch with columns. Curtains drawn over all the windows.

The cars slowly trail past the monstrosity, round a bend, out onto an open field set up for a funeral. Black tents. Chairs neatly in front of a mountainous collage of flowers.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER THE BLACK SCREEN, WE HEAR...

VOICE OVER

They say tears have a wisdom all they own. But when it's all said and done, I reckon it's better to be hated for who ya are than be loved for who you ain't.

FADE IN:

TITLE: TWO WEEKS EARLIER

EXT. THAT SAME FIELD, BUT A HAPPIER TIME

Morning sun shines down on an array of wildflowers all dancing in a gentle breeze.

EXT. MANSION

An old WOMAN, steps out of the mansion onto the big front porch, checks the lock, then strides with an heir of confidence to a Rolls-Royce waiting in the circular driveway.

EXT. DENNY'S PARKING LOT - SAME TIME

What looks like an abandoned car sits near the back of a big parking area.

An upbeat RING TONE takes us into...

INT. VIOLET'S CRAPPY CAR - MORNING

Fingers with black painted nails in need of more polish or none at all, fiddle buttons on a cell phone until the alarm finally stops.

Said fingers belong to VIOLET CAPRI, 24, as she gets up from a sleeping position in the driver's seat, stares in the rearview mirror at bed hair and a tired complexion. Her girl next door good looks faded prematurely by hard times and heavy responsibilities.

VIOLET

Abbey, wake up.

She turns to the backseat to see a little yawning face staring back at her with sleepy eyes. ABBEY CAPRI, 5, is a miniature Violet.

ABBEY

Why do I have to go to school, it's the summer?

VIOLET

Because you'll have a head start on next year. Come on now, brush your teeth.

Abbey takes the toothbrush from her mother. Stares at it with a frown.

ABBEY

When are we gonna get a bathroom
with a sink? And toothpaste?

Violet can't really answer that. She turns back to the front. Tries the ignition.

The car sputters a bit then shuts off. She tries it again, it hisses, then cranks.

ABBEY

I thought you said we were gonna
get pancakes?

Abbey looks out at the Denny's sign.

VIOLET

Maybe tomorrow.

INT. RAMSEY HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

An egg sizzling in an iron skillet, is scooped out of the grease by CATFISH RAMSEY, 57, African American, salt and pepper hair, reading glasses half way down his nose.

He sets the breakfast on the table in front of a small framed, nappy-headed WILLAMENA 'TADPOLE' RAMSEY, seven going on twenty three.

She digs into her eggs and bacon while thumbing through an old worn photo album.

She flips over the only two pages with photographs of a woman holding a tiny baby.

TADPOLE

You think she's gone come back one
day, Grandpa?

She glances up at Catfish who remains buried in his newspaper and morning coffee. He avoids the question.

A stack of bills sits on the table next to him.

INT. VIOLET'S CRAPPY CAR - A LITTLE LATER THAT MORNING

Violet leans back, kisses Abbey on the cheek.

VIOLET

Remember don't say anything about
us camping out last night. It's our
little secret, ok?

Abbey nods then hops out.

Violet watches from the car as Abbey disappears into the
school doors.

EXT. RUN DOWN HOUSE - MORNING

Catfish and Tadpole stand outside on a rickety front porch.
Floor boards missing. Sheets hang in the windows.

Catfish knocks on the door.

CATFISH

Natasha!

TADPOLE

Aunt'ee Tasha! It's me!

Catfish turns the knob. It's open. He looks back to Tadpole.

CATFISH

You stay out here a minute. Lemme
make sure she's home.

She nods. He steps inside.

INT. RUN DOWN HOUSE

A dark and messy excuse for a dwelling. On the couch, unaware
of Catfish or anything else for that matter is NATASHA,
ageless woman, under a mound of blankets and the influence of
whatever she was doing the night before.

CATFISH

Tasha. Get up!

Natasha squints. Her drug-eyes wander. She grunts 'go away'.
Pulls the covers up over her head.

He notices a glass pipe and a lighter on the coffee table.

CATFISH

I toll you that stuff's the devil.
Done hurt all them round ya and you
still ain't learnt. What am I
supposed to do with Tadpole? Huh?
Damn Natasha!

From the front door, Tadpole watches unnoticed.

CATFISH

I'm too old for this. Too damned old.

EXT. FACTORY - MORNING

A large brick building. A sign overhead: Morgan Textiles.

INT. FACTORY - SAME TIME

A giant open room as far as the eye can see. A second floor office at one end. Rows of manned sewing stations. Uniformed FACTORY WORKERS doing their jobs like a colony of honey bees.

We pan up to see the same old woman (from the mansion earlier) staring down from a big glass window on the second floor. Wrinkled and white headed, as starched as her suit. This is RUBY MAE MORGAN.

Violet makes her way through the factory where she's intercepted by POLLY, 46, a short, squatty worker woman who waddles up.

POLLY

Wow, you're early today.

Polly nods towards the office window where Ruby stands.

POLLY

She's on the war path this morning. Sent that new mail clerk home just a while ago.

Violet stops, frowns.

POLLY

Oh honey, what's wrong?

VIOLET

I was gonna ask her for a favor, but maybe I should wait.

Her eyes fall on a handsome man leaning against a machine station chatting it up with a younger factory worker GIRL.

VIOLET

We aren't even divorced yet and look at him.

POLLY

I dunno how you work under the same roof, honey. I'd have cut off his man parts by now if he'd cheated on me.

VIOLET

He said he's gonna fight for custody. I just can't stand the thought...

POLLY

Guys never win in court. He probably just doesn't wanna have to pay child support.

They observe SHERMAN CAPRI, 34, slicked back hair, turned up collar, whose philandering stops when he notices them.

Violet huffs, turns away. Peers up towards Ruby's office.

VIOLET

I hate asking anyone for anything, I really do, but I gotta do this.

POLLY

Good luck!

RUBY'S OFFICE - SECONDS LATER

Ruby glares up from her big desk. Violet shrinks in her shoes as she approaches.

RUBY

Don't you know how to knock?

VIOLET

I'm sorry, Miss Morgan, but I did knock. I won't take much of your time...I just have something I need to ask you.

Violet slides into the chair across from Ruby who stares coldly making Violet's asking even more uncomfortable.

VIOLET

I was wondering if maybe I could get a small advance on my pay.

RUBY

This is a textile factory not a finance company.

Violet nods 'ok' but then presses on.

VIOLET

I wouldn't ask, but I'm going through a really rough time and...

RUBY

What you're going through is called life.

Violet nods again, begins to walk away but turns, pulls something from her pocket. She extends her palm showing a diamond ring and wedding band.

VIOLET

I could give you these as collateral. Sherman paid over a grand for them, and I only need three hundred dollars.

Ruby stares, but not at the jewelry in Violet's hand. Her eyes fix on bruises around Violet's arm.

Violet notices, pulls her sleeve down quickly.

Ruby stands up. Walks to the door and opens it.

Violet feels the rejection, buries the rings in her pocket, as she exits.

Ruby goes over to the big window. Observes the factory.

Polly puts a reassuring arm around Violet's shoulder. They walk down a line of sewing stations.

Ruby clenches her head, rubs her temples, then she spots Catfish entering the factory, lunch box in one hand, Tadpole in the other.

Tadpole skips alongside. She waves to factory workers. She's happy to be there.

Ruby grumbles under breath at the site of them.

Catfish suddenly senses Ruby's stare from up above.

Their eyes lock long enough for her to snap the blinds shut.

FACTORY

Catfish gets a worried look on his face. He stops, leans down to Tadpole's level.

CATFISH

Whatever you do, don't you go messin' with Miss Ruby today. When she closes them blinds up like that, she don't wanna be bothered by nobody. You hear me?

He steps forward to a set of double doors.

CATFISH

Stay put in here. Read yourself some magazines and get a cola. I'll come check on ya when it's my lunchtime.

He gives her a handful of coins, gently pushes her into the break room, then heads out onto the factory floor.

RUBY (O.S.)

Mr. Ramsey!?

He stops, glances up to see Ruby on the second floor scaffolding outside her office.

CATFISH

Yes Ma'am?

RUBY

This isn't a day care. Nor do we intend on establishing a reputation for child labor. There are laws against that you know?

CATFISH

I know, Miss Ruby, but I can promise you it'll be just this one time. She's gonna stay shut up in the break room out'a the way. You got my word on it.

Ruby stomps back into her office.

He shakes his head, continues towards the back of the factory, passes right by a heated argument between the troubled couple.

VIOLET

You think all these young girls around here like you. They don't. It's just because you're the manager, Sherman. They want their job. Their raise. Their time off.

SHERMAN

What were you doing up in the
devil's den?

VIOLET

It's really none of your business,
but if you have to know, I was
tryin' to get an advance for a
deposit on a place. I mean since
you kicked me out and all.

SHERMAN

Now you know the lease was in my
name. It only makes sense. By the
way, where have you and Abbey been
stayin'?

Violet sighs and storms off. He hollers behind her.

SHERMAN

I have a right to know, Vi!

BREAK ROOM - LATER

Dining tables lined up. Shelves of books and magazines. The
place is a mix between a lunchroom and a library.

Tadpole walks to the bookshelf, gazes up in awe as she scans
the books with childlike fascination.

RUBY'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Ruby opens an antique humidor; pulls out one of Cuba's
finest. She bites the end off the cigar.

She lights it. Takes a long drag; rolling it in her fingers.
Smoke wafts through the air.

She leans back, stares blank at the ceiling, lost in a world
of her own until --

-- a tug from below draws her eyes down to Tadpole standing
with a book tucked up under her arm.

Tadpole waves the book to clear the smoky air.

TADPOLE

Pewwie! Don't you know them things
are bad for ya?

RUBY

What do you want?

Tadpole climbs up into Ruby's lap with the book in her hand.

TADPOLE

I wanna be just like you, Miss
Ruby. Have a big house. Drive a
Rolls-Royce. Have a big ole library
all to myself.

She holds the book out.

RUBY

It is library, and that book is too
old for you.

TADPOLE

It ain't too old. I 'member you
readin' it to me when Grandpa used
to come cut your grass. I was just
a minn'a back then.

RUBY

And I only read it then to keep you
from getting into my things. Now go
on out'a here. I don't feel like
reading.

Tadpole flips the book open. Waits.

Ruby looks to the closed blinds, then at the book. She drowns
her cigar in a glass of water and starts reading...

RUBY

Alice was beginning to get very
tired of sitting by her sister on
the bank, and of having nothing to
do: once or twice she had peeped
into the book her sister was
reading, but it had no pictures or
conversations in it, "and what is
the use of a book," thought Alice,
"without pictures or
conversations?"

Ruby stops. Blank-eyed. Labored breaths. Tadpole flips the
page, but Ruby's frozen like a block of ice.

She slumps down in her chair. The book hits the floor.

Tadpole jumps down.

TADPOLE

Miss Ruby? Miss Ruby, you ok!?

Ruby is unresponsive.

TADPOLE
Miss Ruby!??

Tadpole runs to the door, flings it open.

TADPOLE
Grandpa! Come quick!! It's Miss
Ruby!!

MONTAGE

-Catfish and other workers run in.

-An emergency crew puts Ruby onto a stretcher, carries her
down the steps.

-Factory workers gawk as Ruby's rolled by.

-Tadpole watches down from Ruby's office window.

-An ambulance speeds down the road.

-Through the back window, an EMERGENCY TECH tends to Ruby.

INT. CT SCANNER - DAY

Ruby lies in a tube like scanner. An X-ray beam passes over
her face. A drum-like beat echoes throughout the enclosure.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - AFTERNOON

Lying restless in a small hospital bed, Ruby looks at the
clock anxiously until the DOCTOR walks in.

RUBY
Thank goodness, you're here. I have
a factory to run, so please tell me
you've found out what is causing
these debilitating migraines and
that episode today, Doctor?

DOCTOR
I'm afraid so, and it isn't
migraines you're experiencing, Miss
Morgan.

He softens.

DOCTOR
You have an active glioblastoma.
It's a type of brain tumor.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

The tumor is causing pressure in your brain which in turn is causing the pain and discomfort you've been having.

RUBY

Then let's schedule an appointment to cut the thing out.

DOCTOR

Unfortunately, it's not that easy. I'm afraid your specific case is advanced and untreatable.

RUBY

Just what are you trying to say? How long do I have?

DOCTOR

Well, there's no way to know for sure, and miracles do happen, but your CT scan tells us you are looking at one week, maybe two.

A moment of silence while she takes it all in.

She pulls herself up into a sitting position on the side of the bed. Comes to her own decision.

RUBY

Well Doctor, I'm a mean ole crab in case you haven't heard, and I've never needed the authority of money to be one. I assure you, a little tumor isn't going to take me out.

She waves her hand as if shooing him away.

RUBY

Now, hurry up, get me checked out of here.

HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Two NURSES just outside Ruby's room.

NURSE 1

I wish I was heir to that fortune.

NURSE 2

She's a loner. I don't think she's ever had a husband or any family.

NURSE 2 (CONT'D)

Probably too mean. It must suck to be hated by everyone.

NURSE 1

Yeah, I can just hear her eulogy... here lies the richest, meanest ole miser in the world.

They laugh.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nurse 1 heads into the room. Nearly runs into Ruby who stands just inside. Has she heard everything they just said?

INT. RAMSEY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

It's quiet(almost awkward) at the table. Only the sound of forks scraping the plates as Catfish and Tadpole eat.

She watches him as if she wants to say something but is holding back until...

TADPOLE

I didn't mean to do nuttin to hurt Miss Ruby.

He stops eating. Glares at Tadpole.

TADPOLE

I'm for real. All she was doin was readin, and it happened just like that.

Tadpole shrugs.

CATFISH

Didn't I tell ya not ta go messin?

Guilty, Tadpole nods slowly, eyes down.

CATFISH

Them blinds were shut up tight, and I said stay put, but no... you had to go nosin around.

TADPOLE

I swear I didn't do nuttin.

CATFISH

I ain't sayin it's your fault, but
 you was in there when it happened
 so you know who's gone get the
 blame. I work hard to take care of
 ya, Tadpole. I don't mind it, but I
 work too hard to have you messin
 everything up.

TADPOLE

Like I did with Momma? It's my
 fault she went away too ain't it?

Tadpole slams her fork down and runs out crying.

INT. FACTORY - MORNING

Factory workers at work as usual like a bunch of clones in
 Morgan Textile work shirts, tan slacks --

-- but one STRANGER sticks out like a sore thumb amongst
 them. Dressed different, he walks around observing and
 causing a bit of a stir or at least some gossip.

Polly nudges Violet.

POLLY

Who's that bird?

VIOLET

What if it's...her replacement. You
 don't think she's...

They both look up to Ruby's office - door closed, lights off.

POLLY

I dunno, but your old man is about
 to find out.

They watch, unable to hear, as Sherman and the stranger
 converse in the distance.

POLLY

You have to get the scoop. He's
 kind of cute.

VIOLET

Uh, I think you need glasses.

SHERMAN AND THE STRANGER

SHERMAN

We don't allow visitors in the work area without a pass. Miss Morgan is the only one who can issue those, and today she happens to be running late or I'd point you to her office.

STRANGER

Listen, I don't know you and you don't know me, but trust me, you will know me soon enough, probably more than you'd care to, but none the less...

SHERMAN

It's just a liability, you understand? And as a manager, I have to ask you to wait for Miss Morgan if you are going to be...snooping around.

STRANGER

Yeah whatever. Ok fine.

Sherman ushers the stranger towards the stairwell leading to Ruby's office.

EXT. FACTORY - A LITTLE LATER

Cars steady pulling into parking slots. Ruby's Rolls-Royce coasts in and parks.

Ruby steps out, runs her gloved hand along the car hood caressing the hood ornament almost nostalgic.

RUBY

My flying lady never let me down.

A tall FAT MAN factory worker struts past her.

FAT MAN

Good morning, Miss Morgan. I hope you're feeling better this morning.

She quickly hardens back into her usual self, doesn't greet him back.

She turns and strides towards the factory entrance. Taking notice of a fancy car in the parking lot.

INT. FACTORY - MOMENTS LATER

Head held high, Ruby marches up the flight of stairs leading to her office.

Sherman sees her from the back of the factory, hurries to catch her before she gets to the door.

Factory workers whisper amongst each other. Polly looks up.

POLLY (O.S.)

False alarm I guess. I had nightmares about a factory full of midgets singing ding dong the witch is dead.

Polly laughs under breath. Violet rolls her eyes.

VIOLET

God, girl, you aren't right. Even though she didn't give me the advance I needed...

POLLY

Well, you have some balls. Girl balls for even asking.

Sherman's walk turns into a jog now. Ruby nears the top of the steps.

SHERMAN

Miss Morgan!

She doesn't hear him. Enters before he can warn her.

RUBY'S OFFICE

Ruby stops dead in her tracks. Stares at the stranger sitting in *her* seat behind *her* desk.

RUBY

Who are you, and what are you doing in my office? And why aren't you in uniform? We have a strict policy around here...

BRENT (O.S.)

Seriously? The hospital called me yesterday, and I made it down here as fast as I could.

Ruby stands confused.

This stranger is BRENT MORGAN, 35, with a smile that says more than genuine. He looks up from Ruby's chair.

BRENT

Wait. You don't even recognized me, do you? When the doctor said it was a brain tumor, I didn't realize it would affect your memory so much and so fast that you wouldn't be able to recognize your own son. I'm Brent. Brent Ray Morgan.

Ruby is taken aback.

RUBY

I need to sit down, and that's my chair you're in.

Brent still has that same smile perched on his face as he gets up, moves to the seat across from Ruby.

She rubs her head 'it can't be'. Then stares him straight in the eye.

RUBY

How do I know you are who you claim you are?

Brent pulls out his wallet, flips it open extending a Colorado driver's license.

BRENT

Now do you believe me?

Ruby, taken aback.

RUBY

Over thirty years, and you show up like this?

BRENT

Well the hospital did call me. Said you gave them my name as your only family. I felt like coming was the right thing to do. I got here as fast as I could.

RUBY

Well, I'm fine now and I've a factory to run, so you best scurry on back to wherever it is you...

BRENT

Colorado. And I'm between jobs. Thought I may just hang around. You can put me to work. I'll work for free. It would give us a chance to catch up. What do you say?

FACTORY - LATER

Polly nudges Violet. They glare at Sherman and Brent in the distance. He fits in a little better now.

POLLY

All dressed out. She must've given him a job.

SHERMAN AND BRENT

Brent, now in a factory worker shirt, watches as Sherman pulls a lever. A big machine hums to life.

SHERMAN

I never heard anything about Miss Ruby having a son.

BRENT

I'm the only remaining relative. The sole heir.

SHERMAN

I'm going on nearly four years here. Was surprised when she made me a manager.

BRENT

Well, there are going to be some changes around here after she's gone.

SHERMAN

Gone? What do you mean?

BRENT

My mother is dying. Don't let it out or anything, ok?

Sherman, almost sympathetic.

SHERMAN

Wow man, I'm sorry. I had no idea.

BRENT

It's fine. We aren't close, but I figured it was a good time to get to know the factory before she...well, ya know.

Brent stares up at the dusty old yarning machine.

BRENT

Got some antiques around here, I see?

Brent chuckles.

SHERMAN

Yeah, she's a dinosaur, but she still works like new. You can start here. It's pretty easy, the machine does most of the work, but if you need any help...

Sherman points out Catfish.

SHERMAN

That's Catfish, he's been here forever. He was the first to run this thing, so just holler.

Brent nods with an air of confidence.

BRENT

I'm sure I'll be good. I know my way around factories. I closed down some of the biggest in the country.

SHERMAN

Closed them down?

BRENT

Yeah, not something I care to talk about though. People don't understand factories have to evolve with technology or they die.

He nods, unsure about this Brent fellow, then heads away. Says over his shoulder...

SHERMAN

I'll be making rounds if you need me for anything, anything at all, just ask.

POLLY AND VIOLET

Polly nudges Violet again.

POLLY

Ok look he's free. Go on, get the scoop for us single girls.

Violet follows Sherman. Catches up with him at the soda machine against the side wall.

VIOLET AND SHERMAN

VIOLET

Who's the new guy?

SHERMAN

Why, you wanna screw him?

VIOLET

God, Sherman, you are such a mean ass. I just asked a question.

SHERMAN

That right there is Ruby Morgan's son. In my four years, never heard her mention a husband or a son, but that's him in the flesh. Brent Morgan. Probably gonna be our next boss, too.

VIOLET

What do you mean?

Sherman pops the top on the soda. Takes a big swig.

SHERMAN

Nothing. Never mind. I didn't say anything.

Violet rolls her eyes. Strides back for her station.

EXT. HOUSING PROJECTS - AFTERNOON

A neighborhood that's gone to drugs and financial disaster. Run down houses. Shitty cars. Rusted bikes. One of those places you don't want to be after dark.

A Ford truck pulls next to the curb. Parks.

Catfish steps out, heads towards an old blue house, a front yard of dirt and weeds. Trash littered about.

A skinny guy, sunk in eyes, MOSQUITO, opens the door just a crack before Catfish can knock.

MOSQUITO
She ain't here, old man.

CATFISH
I know she's in there, I gotta tell
her something. It's important.

Mosquito pulls the door closed as...

INT. BLUE HOUSE

A thin woman, GERALDINA RAMSEY, sluggishly motions from the couch. Shakes her head as she takes a drag from a pipe, her hands marked with sores, trembling.

EXT. BLUE HOUSE

The door opens slightly. Mosquito peers through at Catfish.

MOSQUITO
I can't letcha in, man. She told me
she don't wanna talk to you no
more.

CATFISH
GERALDINA! I know you in there! I
need to talk to ya about Tadpole. I
ain't got nobody to watch'r while I
work. You need ta step up to the
plate, ya hear?!

No answer from inside. Mosquito shows no emotion.

CATFISH
I'm comin' in there, Geraldina!

Catfish grabs the door knob. Pushes against Mosquito, who struggles to keep it closed but he's no match.

Catfish forces the door open to --

-- a SHOTGUN barrel staring him in the face. Geraldina holds it with a shaky grip.

GERALDINA
Get out'a here, Daddy.

CATFISH

You actin' crazy now, girl. Put
that gun down we gotta talk.

GERALDINA

We done talkin. I got my life'n you
got yours.

CATFISH

This here ain't about me, it's
about your daughter.

He pushes his way in a step. She waves the gun. Her finger
presses slightly on the trigger.

GERALDINA

I ain't got no daughter. I ain't
got no Daddy no more either, so go
on, don't make me do it.

She waves the gun.

GERALDINA

I'll do it, Daddy. I will. I don't
want to, but I will.

A tear rolls down Catfish's face.

CATFISH

Come on Geraldina...

GERALDINA

Just go on and get out'a here.

She waves the gun once more. He shakes his head. Defeated.

Geraldina watches him walk to his truck. She wipes a tear of
her own then the door closes.

INT. FACTORY - MORNING

Violet watches as Brent walks around with Sherman pointing
things out. Sherman has a clipboard that he writes on.

Polly walks up to Violet.

POLLY

Seems Sherman's made a new friend.
So give it to me. What's the scoop?

VIOLET

He didn't say too much. He was weird about it, said something about him being Miss Morgan's son and our next boss. Then he was like never mind. Rude almost. And since I've been here today, they've been hand-in-hand just like that.

RUBY'S OFFICE

Ruby taps a couple of pills out of a prescription bottle. She clenches her head then swallows the medicine.

FACTORY - LATER THAT DAY

A forklift moves pallets of new machinery still in plastic wrap into the factory.

Brent motions the forklift to set the pallets along an empty wall in the distance.

Workers watch curiously. Chatter amongst.

RUBY'S OFFICE

Ruby has her head down on her desk. Startles when the door opens. It's Sherman.

SHERMAN

Here is the invoice. I need to get a check for the man out there.

Ruby stares confused.

SHERMAN

We put the new equipment against that back wall. I hope that's where you wanted it.

RUBY

What equipment?

She shoots daggers at him. Mad as hell. Confused the same.

SHERMAN

The new machines he said you told him to tell me to order.

RUBY

You let him order machines? With who's money? As a manager you know everything goes through me. It's always been that way. Nothing's any different today.

SHERMAN

So what am I supposed to do?

RUBY

We aren't getting any new machines, and that's that.

SHERMAN

But they're here. Out there. Like now. And the man's waiting.

She grumbles. Stomps out of the office leaving Sherman trailing behind, clipboard in hand.

FACTORY

She marches down the stairway. Workers eyes either on Brent, the new machines or Ruby making a b-line to it all.

Polly and Violet stand watching the action.

POLLY

Shit's about to go down. I haven't seen her that mad since Jauncie broke the loom.

VIOLET

Look at him squirm! He's freaking out. Ha. Maybe he'll get canned!

Violet snickers with some delight at Sherman in a pickle.

Ruby throws her arms up right in front of the forklift which comes to an abrupt halt.

RUBY

What is this? I didn't order any of this! You get this stuff out of my factory right this minute!

The FORKLIFT DRIVER holds a delivery paper out of the cab. He shrugs. Just doing his job.

Ruby spins around to Brent.

RUBY

And what in God's name do you think you're doing?

BRENT

I'm saving us about ten thousand dollars a year is what I'm doing.

RUBY

Did you seriously think you could come in here and just change everything without asking me?

Workers trying to eavesdrop now.

RUBY

I let you stay around, for what? So you can turn things upside down?

BRENT

You think we're going to continue to pay all these...these people when I can do the work of a hundred of them with a few machines?

RUBY

You will do no such thing.

BRENT

It's business, Mom.

RUBY

Over my dead body!

BRENT

You said it, I didn't. And I'm only planning ahead for when the factory is mine to run.

Ruby, red in the face, stares in embarrassment.

RUBY

This is MY factory, and I'm not going anywhere!

BRENT

Come on, Mom, you're in denial.

RUBY

I want you out of here! This instance!

BRENT

Why don't you just face it. You ARE dying!

Gasps amongst the onlookers.

She spins around to Sherman.

RUBY

You've already let this idiot trick you into ordering all of this. Get it out of here, and you get him out of my factory! Now!

SHERMAN

But he's your...

RUBY

Now! Unless you want to be leaving with him.

Sherman turns towards Brent who plants his feet, has this 'he isn't going anywhere' look on his face.

Ruby marches away. Everyone stares.

SHERMAN

(to Brent)

Come on. You heard her.

Brent backs up a step. Defensive.

BRENT

That tumor has her acting crazy. She tells me one thing, then tells me something else. Then she tells you she didn't tell me...I assure you, *she's* the one losing it, not me.

Sherman grabs Brent by the arm. Brent jerks away.

BRENT

Get your hands off of me. You can't make me leave. I'm a Morgan!

Catfish and two other burly MEN WORKERS come to Sherman's aid and the four of them escort an angry Brent to the door.

BRENT

I'm going to fire every one of you, just wait! You're going to regret this!

POLLY AND VIOLET

POLLY
O.M.G. What the--

VIOLET
Our jobs are so toast.

RUBY'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Ruby paces the office. She's as mad as a wet hornet.

She nearly collapses. Catches herself on the corner of the desk. Clenches her forehead. Then fans her face.

FACTORY

Sherman motions the forklift as it loads the pallets back up and carries them out of the factory.

Once the last pallet is on the way out, he scuffs into...

RUBY'S OFFICE

An apologetic Sherman, clipboard in hand.

SHERMAN
I'm sorry about all that, Miss Morgan. He said he'd ok'd things with you. That y'all were going to, what did he call it, modernize things around here.

She looks up. Furrows her brow.

SHERMAN
I know. I know I should've asked, it's just I didn't want to bother you with you being sick and all. He acted like he had things squared away, like you already had given him the authority to take over the factory. Run it the way he deemed fit.

RUBY
He will never get this factory! You can mark my words.

She stares off into nothing, glassy eyed, either in deep thought or denial.

She stumbles into her chair. Clutches her head.

SHERMAN

Miss Morgan, are you alright?

RUBY

Get everyone together, tell them
I'm calling a meeting in an hour.
Mandatory.

SHERMAN

Yes Ma'am. I'm on it. You sure
you're ok?

She waves him out.

ONE HOUR LATER

Workers all move towards the area under Ruby's office. Violet and Polly arrive together.

It's crowded with factory workers packed together like sardines. A steady hum of chatter amongst them until Ruby's door opens, and she walks out.

All eyes fixed on Ruby. A place so silent you could hear a pin drop.

RUBY

I'm sure all of you know I was
carted off to the hospital
yesterday. What you didn't know is
that the doctor tells me that I am
dying.

Chatter amongst the crowd. Whispering. Fear in all of them awaiting their fate.

RUBY

As I'm sure this news will be
pleasing to many of you as I'm not
very liked around here,
nonetheless, I aim to beat the odds
and even death itself.

Polly to Violet whispering...

POLLY

Probably out live us all.

RUBY

But a woman of my stature doesn't leave this world with any loose ends untied, and in case I don't win this little battle, I've decided to hand over my fortune and factory to whomever can write my eulogy, the best eulogy, to be judged by me, of course, before I check out of this cruel world.

Whispers within the crowd. Hope spreading like wildfire.

RUBY

You have one week. I'll post instructions as to what comes next by the time clock so check in daily. Up until then, I do not want anyone trying to mooch up. I don't need any brown-nosers. Hence, I don't want to be bothered. It's business as usual around here, you do the contest on your own time, not mine. Now back to work.

Ruby turns and disappears inside her office.

They disperse, a newfound hope in all of them.

Sherman trails Violet.

VIOLET

I can't believe she's dying. And why would she give the factory to a stranger over her own son?

SHERMAN

I don't know, but I got this.

VIOLET

You're so insensitive. And what makes you so sure you can win? There are like two hundred people here.

SHERMAN

Uh, I wrote for the high school newspaper, remember?

POLLY

And that was like how many years ago?

SHERMAN

I'm tellin' you, I'm ownin' it.
You'll see.

He heads in another direction.

VIOLET

(to Polly)

Oh my God, the thought of him
winning all that money. He could
take Abbey from me. I'm freaking
out here.

POLLY

Chill silly, he's not going to win.

VIOLET

Isn't a eulogy supposed to be
something *nice* to say about a
person's life?

POLLY

Yeah, so I guess we lie. You know
there isn't anyone in here who's
gonna tell it like it really is?
Not if they wanna have a chance.

VIOLET

I really need to win this thing.

POLLY

We all do.

VIOLET

I need this for Abbey.

POLLY

I still don't get why you let him
push you out of that house. Any
woman that finds her husband
cheating has him by the balls.
There isn't a judge in the world
that would tell you any different
either, honey.

VIOLET

Sad thing is, if it was only his
cheating, I may've stayed, but I
had to get away from him. He's not
good for me...or Abbey.

INT. SALON - AFTERNOON

STYLISTS clip, cut, curl and color in a busy salon.

Violet walks in, Abbey follows like her shorter shadow.

KERRY, 21, a stylist with pinkish hair, spins around.

KERRY

O-M-G girl! So come here and tell me about the contest! The salon's been buzzing all day about it.

She ushers Abbey up into her chair.

KERRY

Wait a minute, where is Abbey? Has anyone seen Abbey?

Kerry playfully pushes Abbey's bangs out of her eyes.

KERRY

There she is!

Abbey giggles. Kerry gawks at Violet's hair.

KERRY

Oh girl, your roots are killin' me! When are ya gonna let me fix you up?

VIOLET

I am what they call the working poor, so as soon as I figure out how to win that contest, I'll take care of these roots. Thing is, I just can't understand how anyone's gonna find anything good to say about such a vile woman? I mean I feel bad that she's dying and all, but I just can't imagine.

Kerry spritzes down Abbey's hair. Trims ends while smacking bubble gum, popping bubbles.

KERRY

Life's too short to live unhappy. That's my motto.

VIOLET

If I could only find a golden nugget. Just one tiny thing good to say that was really real, ya know?

POP goes a bubble. Kerry freezes, turns to Violet.

KERRY
O-M-G I got it!

Kerry flips through a small appointment book.

KERRY
I have this old Irish...or is she Russian...anyway I have this client that went on and on about how she was Miss Morgan's high school teacher.

VIOLET
Oh gosh, I bet she knows a heap. Do you think she'd talk to me? Like a short interview even?

KERRY
Maybe if you offered her a cut of the pie. Want me to give her a call for you? It's worth a shot.

VIOLET
Oh Kerry, if you could make that happen I'd be sure to have an advantage. Can you? Please?? I need this so bad.

KERRY
I'm on it, girlfriend.

Kerry dials a number on her cell while clipping and cutting. She clamps a blue tooth to her ear.

KERRY
(on the phone)
Ms. Olga? Hey, this is Kerry
(pause) yes, your hair stylist. I have a dear friend who would love to talk to you about one of your former students (pause) yes she works at the factory (pause) yes it's about the contest...

Kerry grabs a business card from her smock. Scribbles down something on the back.

KERRY
...tomorrow night, seven sharp
(pause) yes I will tell her.
(pause) Ok thanks Ms. Olga (pause)
Bye now.

Kerry pulls the cape off of little Abbey, hands her a piece of bubble gum. Turns to Violet with a smile.

KERRY

Seven o'clock tomorrow night. You can make it right?

VIOLET

Yeah, I guess, well I have Abbey.

KERRY

What about Sherman?

ABBEY

Yeah! Daddy! Daddy!

Violet gives Kerry a sarcastic 'thanks a lot' glance. Kerry hands over the business card.

KERRY

Her name is Olga. Olga Titschendorf. Here's the addy. Oh and she said wear something comfortable like a sweat suit.

VIOLET

Why does it matter what I wear? I'm just asking her some questions.

KERRY

I dunno but, I'd come naked if it was gonna help win me a million bucks. Don't worry about it. Just do whatever it takes and win the contest.

Kerry follows Violet and Abbey on the way out. She opens the door for them, pops her gum, and reminds...

KERRY

And don't forget your hair girl! You are gonna be rich! Oh, and come get those roots done!

INT. RAMSEY HOUSE - CATFISH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tadpole walks through the door into a modest bedroom. Dark paneled walls. Scant with furniture.

She slinks to the bed where Catfish sits propped up writing on a note pad.

He looks up over his reading specs to see her dodging the myriad of crumpled paper balls on the floor.

TADPOLE

What in the world you doin' in here, Grandpa?

He takes off his glasses.

CATFISH

What in the world you doin' sneakin' up in my bedroom when you supposed to be sleepin'?

TADPOLE

I had a bad night dream.

He pats the bed. Slides over. She crawls up beside him.

TADPOLE

What'cha writin'?

CATFISH

It ain't nothin'...just some eulogy thing for mean ole Miss Ruby.

TADPOLE

What is a eulogy?

CATFISH

Just a thing they read at funerals when people bout to be buried.

TADPOLE

Buried? Miss Ruby ain't gonna die, is she?

CATFISH

Everybody dies, Tadpole. Mean as she is, she deserves it, I reckon.

She frowns.

CATFISH

I know I always told you there's a lil good in every person, even Miss Ruby I suspect, but bad as she is, I just can't bring myself to write down no lies.

Tadpole leans over, stares down at the crumpled papers.

TADPOLE

That what all them are down there?
Lies?

CATFISH

Yes'm. And you know I don't like no
lies, but this contest would do us
a world'a good. Money like that do
anybody a world'a good. Change
everything it would.

He goes back to scribbling on his paper. Dissatisfied again,
he rips the paper off, gives it to Tadpole who crumples it
up, casts it down with the others on the floor.

She giggles.

EXT. DENNY'S PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Violet's crappy car sits beneath a street light.

A police cruiser rolls into the parking lot.

INT. VIOLET'S CRAPPY CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Tap tap. Violet jumps startled. She squints into a beam of
light coming from a COP'S flashlight.

She rolls down the window.

VIOLET

You scared me to death.

The Cop looks at Violet, then shines the light into the
backseat where Abbey sits, frightened look on her face.

COP

The restaurant called in. You can't
park out here overnight.

He glances back at the child. Then back at Violet.

COP

You have somewhere you can go,
right?

VIOLET

Oh yes, yes sir. I was just waiting
on someone to meet me, and I guess
I fell asleep.

Skeptic, he leans down to speak just for Violet.

COP

There are centers around here if
you need any help, ma'am.

VIOLET

Oh no, really, I'm fine. Thank you,
officer.

EXT. DENNY'S PARKING LOT

The Cop nods. Stands back upright.

He watches as Violet's car pulls away. He waves to Abbey
staring out of the back window. She waves back.

INT. RUBY'S MANSION - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Books line every wall of a stately room. A large portrait of
Ruby herself hangs over a mahogany desk where she sits.

She looks more frail in her nightgown and robe. Her gray hair
let down. Closed up in that big old house, she's a lot less
starched you could say.

Perhaps she is passing that state of denial as she flips
through the yellow pages. Stops on a section of funeral
homes. Before she gets the number down, CRACK, the lead of
her pencil breaks off.

She pulls the drawer for another, but retrieves a book
instead...the same book she was reading earlier to Tadpole
when that episode hit her.

She stares at the book in deep thought. Grabs a pencil,
closes the drawer.

EXT. SHERMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sherman opens the door. He slurs when he speaks.

SHERMAN

Lo-ok at what the c-cat dragged in.

Abbey, all smiles, passes him and disappears inside.

SHERMAN

My pussy cat done come back home.

Sherman grabs Violet's arm. Pulls her in the door. A strange
fear in her eyes.

INT. SHERMAN'S HOUSE

Abbey knows how to work the remote as she hops on the couch. The TV comes to life. Cartoons. Loud.

SHERMAN
What can I do you for?

VIOLET
I just was going to ask if we could stay the night, but never mind.

Sherman rubs up against Violet getting frisky.

VIOLET
We should be going. It's past her bedtime, Sherman.

She pulls back. Talks quiet where Abbey won't hear.

VIOLET
Do you mind? Abbey is sitting right there.

SHERMAN
Loosen up. You're too tight. I got some Bud, wait, I forgot you don't drink beer, don't smoke...

Violet steps away.

VIOLET
Abbey! Come on, it's time to go.

ABBEY
But Ma! We just got here.

SHERMAN
You were always a god damn tease, you know it?

VIOLET
I'm not talkin to you when you're like this.

SHERMAN
Like what? Like what!?? Say it! Go on, say it! Like what, Vi!?

Sherman's drunk-temper is intensifying.

VIOLET
Abbey! Hurry up!

She foots it for the door, but Sherman grabs her. She can't pull away. He's rough as he drags her into the kitchen.

Unaware, Abbey turns off the TV, hops off the couch. Looks around. They are not in sight. But the sounds from the kitchen...pots and pans hit the floor in the other room. A scream. It's the sound of a struggle.

Abbey walks towards the noise. Just before she gets to the kitchen entrance, Violet storms around the corner crying.

She picks up Abbey, speeds for the door.

KITCHEN

Sherman stumbles after them.

FOYER

But it's too late as the door slams in his face. He grumbles drunkenly under breath.

INT. VIOLET'S CRAPPY CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Violet drives. Wipes tears from her face. Scowls as her fingers cross her cheek bone already turning blue.

ABBEY

Where are we going now? I thought we were going to have a sleep over at Daddy's?

Violet just drives. Avoids answering.

ABBEY

Turn around. Let's go back, please. He's got Nickelodeon. I don't wanna sleep in the car again.

Abbey's plea makes tears stream from Violet's eyes.

Violet puts on her blinker, wheels the car into an all night drive through. She taps the steering wheel with her hand.

She wipes her face once more, then turns to the backseat.

VIOLET

Abbey, we can't go back to Daddy's tonight.

ABBEY

But why not?

VIOLET

We just can't. Just one more night
or two I promise ok? We'll get ice
cream tonight and pancakes
tomorrow. Deal?

Abbey doesn't look thrilled, but nods ok.

EXT. ETERNITY FUNERAL HOME AND CREMATORY - MORNING

A nicely manicured lawn. So nice it may be indoor outdoor
carpet. Pristine building freshly painted.

Ruby's Rolls-Royce pulls into the lot amongst other cars.

She stares out of the windshield up at the big neon over the
building: ETERNITY FUNERAL HOME & CREMATORY.

INT. ETERNITY FUNERAL HOME AND CREMATORY - CONTINUOUS

Richly decorated to the point of cheesy. Elaborate sitting
furniture. Red carpet throughout.

Ruby strolls in, isn't sure where to go. Music draws her to
an open door where she stops.

Ruby turns to see a sniffling blue haired woman with a FANCY
HAT that covers most of her head and face.

Fancy Hat grabs Ruby's arm. Pulls her into the...

VISITATION ROOM

Family and friends gathered about. Consoling one another.
Some stand around the casket. A hoard of flower arrangements
decorate the room.

Fancy Hat drags Ruby toward the opened coffin.

FANCY HAT

They really did a good job. She
looks absolutely beautiful, doesn't
she?

Fancy Hat pulls out a shot-sized bottle of whiskey. Slips it
next to a ghostly pale CADAVER laying in the casket.

Ruby stares at the dead woman. Realization hits her like a ton of bricks. Her legs go weak. She nearly falls out but is escorted by a TALL MAN to a nearby chair.

TALL MAN

It wasn't easy for me either. Seein her like this. She was so full of life. A lover. She could make the saddest person laugh the night away, and I know it first hand.

Ruby stares into nowhere as the Tall Man's voice trails off. She stands up, heads for the exit.

Rushing out, she nearly runs smack into a plump black suit, name tag on his lapel: DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK, a walking fashion disaster with his butterfly collar, satin vest two sizes too big, and red glasses that could've belonged to Elton John.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK

Excuse muah, mademoiselle.

He glances in on the visitation. Then strides after Ruby. Diverts her at the front door.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK

Oh honey bunny, don't be sad now. Here you go.

He hands her a monogrammed handkerchief. Steps in closer like those people that don't know how to respect personal space.

He has this mustache that is as manicured as the lawn(it may even be fake too), gelled and curled at the ends.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK

Come come now, it's not supposed to be distressing. We like to think of passing on as a celebration of life! Take my hand, I'll go back in there with you. It's not so bad.

She cuts her eyes at him. Blows her nose into the hanky.

He cringes then fakes a smile that curls up like his mustache when she peers up at him.

He moves closer though he's already inches from her face.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK

Ready my dear?

RUBY

I don't even know those people.

She stares at his face.

RUBY
Are you wearing make up?

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK
Cripes! You caught me. Bare minerals. It absorbs the sweat, and I rather like the way it makes my skin look, sort of like those mannequins in Macy's.

Ruby rolls her eyes.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK
How can I be of assistance, Miss...

RUBY
Morgan. Ruby Mae Morgan. I need to plan a funeral.

Instantly he perks up. Everyone's heard of Ruby Morgan.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK
Well then, you came to the perfect place. I am Stanley Stopchuck, your one-stop-shop director here at Eternity.

RUBY
What kind of name is *Eternity* for a funeral parlor?

He ushers her towards his office. Talks all the while.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK
Special, huh? We like to think that even though our clients pass on from this life, they will be remembered for eternity. It's a sentimental thought, don't you think?

She follows. Mumbles to herself.

RUBY
Ridiculous.

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

As lavishly decorated as the lobby. A big black lacquer desk sits between Ruby and Director Stopchuck.

He scatters an array of funeral 'menus' in front of Ruby.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK

I'm actually very pleased you got to step in on a visitation so you could see how posh our set up is.

She thumbs through the pamphlets. Sighs and sits back.

She rubs her temples.

He grabs up a pamphlet.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK

This one here really sends you out in style. It's the one I have picked out for my life partner. Which do you like, Miss Morgan?

RUBY

None of these really fit what I'm looking for.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK

Wait a cotton picking minute then. Hold the pickles, hold the lettuce. The sky is the limit at Eternity. There isn't anything we can't do, so hit me. What is it that you want? Tell me how you want to go out, Miss Morgan.

RUBY

I would like to have my visitation ceremony while I'm still alive.

He's surprised by this.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK

Tell me more.

RUBY

I'm holding a very important contest and would like the judging to take place, well, while I'm still here to see that it is done right.

He is taken aback, but he's a salesman and knows money isn't an option with this client.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK
 Uh huh, I get you. I really do.
 See, I'm a stickler for detail, I
 mean, it's obvious right?

He motions at his outfit. She isn't impressed.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK
 But really, whatever you want,
 Eternity and Stanley Stopchuck can
 do. Can I just ask one question?

She nods.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK
 Why? Inquiry minds want to know.

RUBY
 Because you can't trust people, and
 if you can't trust anyone in life,
 do you seriously think you could
 trust anyone after you die?? Think
 about it.

He ponders. Curls the end of his mustache with his fingers.
 Then looks her dead in the eye.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK
 I suppose you have a point, but
 generally when people...pass
 on...friends and family tend to
 find and focus on a loved one's
 respectable qualities.

She hesitates in deep thought.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK
 Why don't you take some time. Think
 it over. I mean as long as we have
 a deposit...

RUBY
 I only have a few days if the
 doctor is right. I'm ready to do
 this, and as I said, I want to have
 full control of it...the whole
 process. I will handle the flowers,
 the music, the visitation and
 whatever else it is people do when
 they croak around here.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK
 Pass on. This is Eternity,
 remember.

She pulls out her checkbook. He smiles. Hands her a pen.
 He pulls out a contract, dollar signs in his eyes.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK
 A woman in charge. I like that. I
 can guarantee YOU will be in
 complete control, Ms. Morgan.

He points out places along the contract for her signature.

INT. MORGAN TEXTILE FACTORY - MAIN FLOOR - MORNING

Violet, dark sunglasses on, punches her time card as Polly
 walks up.

POLLY
 So, did you write your's?

VIOLET
 Not yet.

POLLY
 I have written ten different
 eulogies..stayed up until after
 midnight. It's gonna to be hard
 deciding which to choose though.
 You'd better get started. We can
 critique each other's if you want.

Polly steps in front of Violet. Motions where glasses would
 be on her own face. Violet ignores it.

POLLY
 Sunglasses.

VIOLET
 I know. I haven't slept. Baggy dark
 circles. I don't want him to see me
 like this.

Before Violet can react, Polly reaches up and pulls the
 sunglasses off. Her eyes say 'whoops sorry' when she notices
 the shiner under Violet's eye.

POLLY
 (whispering)
 Oh honey, what happened to you?

Violet puts the shades back on.

VIOLET

I hit my cheek bone getting out of the car. It's no big deal.

Polly's face says she doesn't really believe that.

VIOLET

What are you doing tonight? I'm trying to find a sitter.

POLLY

I have a date with Roger, that guy I've been talking to on Plenty of Fish. Remember, the one with the BMW I told you about? You should really try it. It's like a man buffet on there.

VIOLET

Oh geeze girl, you are going to get murdered. You ARE meeting him in a public place I hope.

POLLY

Of course I am. I'm not crazy. Here comes Sherman. What about askin him? It's kind of his duty.

Violet cringes and sighs.

VIOLET

I was trying to avoid that.

Sherman taps Violet on the shoulder. She spins around.

SHERMAN

You girls get to work if you're punched in. Why so jumpy, Vi?

POLLY

She bumped her head, maybe she needs a day off or a baby sitter for tonight or something.

Violet looks at Polly like 'I'm going to kill you'. Polly saunters off.

SHERMAN

Why you wearing those?

She pulls them down enough for him to see the bruise.

SHERMAN

How'd you do that?

VIOLET
 You know how it happened, quit
 acting like you have amnesia.

SHERMAN
 I'd love to watch my daughter, you
 know that. What's goin on with you?
 You gotta hot date?

Violet fidgets, twirls her hair around her finger nervously.

VIOLET
 Not a date. I'm meeting a
 friend...for coffee.

SHERMAN
 Sounds like a date to me.

VIOLET
 It's not a date, Sherman.

SHERMAN
 Who's it with then?

VIOLET
 Just one of the girls.

SHERMAN
 Which one of the girls?

VIOLET
 Sherman, I don't need twenty
 questions. Will you watch her or
 not?

SHERMAN
 I already told you I would. Are
 those my Ray Bans?

Both their eyes shift to Ruby who saunters in slowly on her
 way up to her office.

SHERMAN
 Late.

VIOLET
 Thank God. I was beginning to
 wonder if she'd...

SHERMAN
 You act as if you almost like her
 all the sudden.

VIOLET

I like the fact that she's giving us all a chance to win a fortune. I can turn my whole life around. Pay cash for a house and get a new car.

SHERMAN

I haven't even started writing mine yet. Not sweating it though, should be an easy mil for me. I've read two or three of the entries so far and they are horrible. No competition.

VIOLET

FYI, I got a secret weapon of my own.

He perks up.

SHERMAN

Do tell.

She shakes her head and shuffles off.

SHERMAN

Come on, Vi! You're killin' me!

INT. RUN DOWN HOUSE - AFTERNOON

A TV runs in the background. Catfish takes a seat next to Natasha on the couch.

CATFISH

You lookin' better today. Alive anyway.

NATASHA

Don't start with me, Daddy.

CATFISH

I got one question for ya. If I could send you and ya sister to treatment, would ya go?

NATASHA

You can't afford that. And nobody's seen Geraldina in like two years.

CATFISH

I seen her. I know where she's stayin. But what if I could afford it?

Natasha sits up. This has her attention.

NATASHA

Just how you gone do that?

CATFISH

There's a contest at work. We'd be rich as them Beverly Hillbillies if I can pull it off. All I gotta do is write a good eulogy.

NATASHA

You? Write a eulogy?

She laughs out loud.

CATFISH

I know I ain't much good at readin or writin, but I'm gonna try.

TADPOLE (O.S.)

I'll help ya!

Catfish turns to see Tadpole strutting in, coloring book dangling from her hand.

NATASHA

She's been readin ta me. Gone be the smartest of the Ramsey's I bet.

Tadpole smiles big. Catfish stands up, heads for the door.

TADPOLE

Bye aunt'ee Tasha.

Tadpole waves on her way out. Catfish stops, turns back.

CATFISH

Don't forget my proposition. I love you, Natasha.

NATASHA

You know I'm game, Daddy, but Geraldina, she's past help last I heard so don't get ya hopes up.

INT. GAS STATION BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

Graffiti covered walls. Dirty floors. A line of dirty sinks.

Violet stares into a smudged mirror. Tucks her hair under a ball cap.

VIOLET

You covered the potty right?

A voice comes from a stall. Only two small legs are visible hanging down not touching the floor.

ABBEY

Yes.

Violet pulls a sweat suit from a plastic bag.

ABBEY

I need some more toilet paper.

Violet drops the sweats on the floor, disappears in a stall. Hands a wad of paper under Abbey's stall.

VIOLET

I think Daddy's taking you to Dairy Queen so hurry up in there.

An older LADY walks in. Conservative dress. A gold cross hangs from her necklace.

ABBEY

My favorite! Am I gonna get to sleep in my bed? I'm sick of sleeping in the car.

The Lady shoots Violet a nosy 'shame on you' look.

Violet quickly picks up her clothes from the floor, shoves them back in the plastic bag as the Lady enters a stall.

The sound of a toilet flushing then Abbey walks out.

ABBEY

I thought you were changing clothes Momma?

VIOLET

Shh.

She grabs Abbey's hand. They hurry out of the bathroom.

EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Violet and Abbey make their way towards the car, Abbey skips alongside holding her mother's hand.

Violet helps Abbey in then makes her way around to the driver's side.

INT. VIOLET'S CRAPPY CAR - CONTINUOUS

Violet cranks the car. Peers in the rearview to see the conservative Lady exiting the rest-rooms.

She puts it in gear, speeds out of the lot.

INT. RAMSEY HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Catfish stands over the sink doing dishes.

CATFISH

Tadpole?! You got your room picked up?!

No answer. He finishes rinsing the last coffee cup. Turns the faucet off and heads out.

INT. RAMSEY HOUSE - TADPOLE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Tadpole is arranging a myriad of stuffed animals neatly on the bed when Catfish walks in.

CATFISH

How come you din't answer me while ago? I was callin an I know ya heard me.

TADPOLE

I wish I could get a real animal instead of all these fake ones. A puppy or somethin.

CATFISH

When you get all grown up and have your own place, then you can get a puppy. I got my hands full. Can't handle another mouth to feed. Poop to clean up.

TADPOLE

I'm so lucky to have a grandpa like you.

CATFISH

No sense in butterin' me up, the answer's still the same.

TADPOLE

It's always no. I'd take good care of a dog if you ever got me one.

She pouts.

A KNOCK at the door echoes throughout the house.

INT. RAMSEY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A TV comes on in the background as Catfish escorts TED, 40, business clothes and folder, to the couch.

Tadpole works the remote control.

TADPOLE
Hey cousin Ted.

TED
Looks like you're getting along
mighty fine, young lady.

On the TV screen: *The Walking Dead*. Zombies chase a woman screaming through the woods.

Catfish takes the remote. Flips the channel and hands it back to Tadpole. Ted chuckles.

TED
I can't keep mine from watching it
either, Willy. It doesn't bother me
a bit.

TADPOLE
Grandpa don't go by Willy,
everybody calls him Catfish. And
that's why he calls me Tadpole. I'm
like a little version of him.

Ted winks at Tadpole.

TED
I know silly. He's my cousin,
remember?

She flips it back to the zombie show.

Ted takes a seat on the couch next to Catfish. He opens up the folder. Flips through some papers.

CATFISH
Tadpole, why don't you go watch
that in my bedroom so me and Ted
can talk. And don't turn it up too
loud, ya hear?

Tadpole flips the TV off, disappears down the hall.

TED

Everything looks good around here. I don't know how you do it. With both me and Molly, we can't manage to even keep the toys off the floor.

Ted pulls out some papers.

TED

I have the papers we spoke about. You made a decision yet?

Catfish runs his hand through his hair.

CATFISH

I don't know. It's just I can't depend on Natasha no more. I had to take Tadpole to work with me yesterday. Nearly lost my job over it. I dunno what to do anymore, Ted. I love that little girl like she was my own. I just ain't sure I'm ready to sign her away just like that.

TED

With her mother still M.I.A. and your work load, it may be the only solution. I see this a lot. I went ahead and drew up the paperwork. You don't have to sign it tonight, but you need to make a decision sooner than later while I have that Morrison family open. They are well off, Willy. A nice Christian family, too.

Ted hands some paperwork over to Catfish.

CATFISH

You think she'd be better off? That what you sayin?

TED

Come on Willy, I'm not saying she'd be better off, just saying she'd have everything she needs is all.

CATFISH

I do have one more shot. There's this contest they got goin' on at work. You heard'a Miss Ruby Morgan?

CATFISH (CONT'D)

Talkin about rich, now she got the benjamins I'm telling you.

TED

I've heard about it. Think everybody's heard about it. Sounds too good to be true if you ask me.

CATFISH

I haven't figured it out myself. First, we found out she had a son. Nobody knew about that before the other day. Then she announces she's givin everything away to whoever can write the best eulogy.

Catfish perks up.

CATFISH

If I could win that thing, I'd be set for life, and so would Tadpole. Wouldn't be no question bout me raisin her. Sendin' her ta college an stuff.

EXT. RAMSEY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Catfish stands in the doorway. Ted just outside.

TED

Remember the Morrison family. A door like that won't remain open long. And I'm here to help you through it if you decide to do it. It's not as bad as it sounds.

Catfish doesn't say anything. Just nods and waves as Ted walks to his car in the driveway.

EXT. SHERMAN'S HOUSE - EVENING

Violet's crappy car pulls into the driveway. A new pink bike with training wheels sits in the front yard.

Abbey springs out of the car, runs to the bike as the front door opens up.

ABBEY

Daddy! Daddy! I love it!

Sherman waltzes out with a pat-himself-on-the-back smile.

SHERMAN
And we'll take it for a spin after
a cookie dough blizzard.

He looks over to Violet who's standing by the driver's side
of her crappy car.

SHERMAN
Violet.

VIOLET
You mind if I change clothes inside
real quick?

She reaches in the car and grabs out the bag of clothes.

SHERMAN
What's wrong with what you got on?
Coffee with the girls requires
something more...sexy?

VIOLET
Forget it!

She throws the bag back into the car. Scowls at him. Starts
to rip into him but holds her tongue because little eyes are
watching. She mumbles under breath as she gets in the car.

She slams the door, and he's right there in her window.

SHERMAN
You can change, Vi. Go on in.
Really, I don't care. You may wanna
rethink wearing that ball cap
though. The tomboy get-up really
isn't that appealing. Just saying.

VIOLET
You're such an asshole, Sherman.

She waves and forces a smile for Abbey.

VIOLET
See you in a couple hours! Be good!

Sherman watches as Violet backs out of the driveway.

She flips him 'the middle finger'. Speeds off.

INT. VIOLET'S CRAPPY CAR - LATER

FROM THE CD PLAYER

To make the journey into The Power
of Now you need to leave your
analytical mind and its false
created self, the ego, behind.

Violet drives while studying the address on the back of the
business card.

She glances at the numbers on buildings as they fly by.

FROM THE CD PLAYER

Access to the Now is everywhere -
in the body, the silence, and the
space all around you. These are the
keys to enter a state of inner
peace. They can be used to bring
you into the Now, the present
moment, where problems do not
exist. It is here you find your joy
and are able to embrace your true
self. It is here you discover that
you are already complete and
perfect.

She whirls her head around. Did she miss the address?

Eyes back on road. Tires screech as she nearly hits the car
stopped in front of her at a red light.

VIOLET

Damnit!

The annoying self help cd rambles on in the background. She
reaches up and hits the power button. SILENCE.

Traffic moves again. She makes a U-turn.

EXT. DRAGON DOJO ACADEMY - MOMENTS LATER

Violet's crappy car sits in front a big glass window
portraying a red dragon. Three paper lanterns hang under the
red letters: DRAGON DOJO ACADEMY.

Violet steps out, business card in hand. She's still in her
normal clothes which consist of a knee length skirt, button
down shirt, boots and sunglasses.

She checks the address on the card with the address on the
front door. Can it be?

She pulls the door open, enters...

INT. DRAGON DOJO ACADEMY - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

A karate academy retail space. Uniforms, sparring gear, a display of mouthpieces. One section dedicated to personal protection: pepper spray, stun guns, mace.

Violet scans the room. Startles when...

KARATE KID (O.S.)
Watashi-tachi no dojo e yokoso.

A spitting image of the KARATE KID, thick glasses, about 13 years old, short, not Asian at all, laughs at Violet.

KARATE KID
Sorry if I scared you, miss.
Welcome to our dojo.

Karate Kid is still laughing about it.

VIOLET
I'm looking for Mrs. Titschendorf.

He stops laughing. Scrunches his face up.

KARATE KID
Who?

Violet extends the business card with the name scribbled.

VIOLET
Olga Titschendorf.

Karate Kid is back to laughing again. Nodding.

KARATE KID
Follow me. Are you taking the class tonight?

VIOLET
Oh no. I'm not here for any class.
Just to speak with Mrs.
Titschendorf. She's expecting me.

He looks back with a smile. She follows him into...

THE DOJO

A Japanese temple. Several Karate Kids mill about. One with a smoking sage stick makes his way around the perimeter of the room. Another beats on drums in the corner.

KARATE GIRL (O.S.)

Take them off quick! Before she sees!

A KARATE GIRL, 16, stares up at Violet then points to a line of shoes against the wall.

KARATE GIRL

No shoes allowed on the dojo floor.

VIOLET

Sorry.

Violet removes her boots, sets them in line with mostly child-sized tennis shoes.

KARATE KID

And don't forget, when the Sensei comes in, bow, ok? She'll be in any minute. You can stretch or whatever.

Karate Kid smiles, presses his hands together and bows quick before he hurries back out of the dojo leaving Violet in a foreign world.

The drum beats get louder. All the kids rush about into some sort of formation.

Two Karate Kids usher Violet over into the group. She sticks out like a sore thumb in her street clothes.

They all press their hands together and bow -- except Violet.

A figure in a hooded cape walks towards the group, passes the front line. All the Karate Kids watch the hooded figure as it stops in front of Violet.

The figure reaches up, pulls the hood back revealing a wrinkled and worn 'master' -- this is the Sensei a.k.a OLGA TITSCHENDORF.

OLGA

You must be that girl from the factory.

VIOLET

Are you Mrs. Titschen...

OLGA
I am SENSEI in here.

Olga presses her hands together, bows.

VIOLET
I just need to ask you a few questions. It won't take long.

OLGA
After class. Now take those sunglasses off. Get into formation. Follow along. You may learn something.

Olga stares at the shiner as Violet removes the glasses, there is a silent communication.

Olga strides to the front of the class.

OLGA
Get into position.

All the Karate Kids get into position. Violet struggles to get her body positioned like theirs. They block and kick to the Sensei's count.

OLGA
Ichi, ni, san, shi, go...

Violet gets looks and giggles out of the Karate Kids as she tries her best to keep up with them.

EXT. DAIRY QUEEN - EVENING

A fast food joint with all sorts of frozen treats plastered on the window. Ice Cream. Dilly Bars. Hot fudge sundaes.

Sherman and Abbey step out of his truck. He waves to a woman in the parking lot, who strides over and catches up with them on the way in.

SHERMAN
Abbey, this is my friend Ginger.

GINGER, 25, too much make up, not a hair out of place, clothes that are beyond tight, leans over and smiles.

GINGER
So this is the little charmer you told me about. Hello there.

Abbey just stares up at her.

INT. DAIRY QUEEN - MOMENTS LATER

A CASHIER stands at the register. Sherman, Abbey and Ginger's turn to order.

GINGER

I'll have a strawberry banana smoothie please, ma'am.

SHERMAN

Banana split for me, pile on the nuts, too.

Ginger pinches Sherman from behind. He jumps.

SHERMAN

Abbey. Tell the lady what you want.

ABBEY

I don't want anything. I lost my appetite.

INT. DRAGON DOJO ACADEMY - NIGHT

The last of the Karate Kids exit the dojo leaving just a worn out, drenched in sweat Violet and a seventy nine year old, black belt Sensei, Olga Titschendorf.

VIOLET

I just never imagined what a karate class was like. Your students are very disciplined.

Olga walks over to a water cooler. Drops tea bags into two coffee cups and fills them with hot water.

She hands one to Violet, then takes a seat on the floor Indian-style. Violet does the same.

OLGA

So you wanna hear about my Ruby?

VIOLET

I do. I've worked at the factory for three years, but still I barely know her.

Olga motions at the shiner.

OLGA

I teach a self defense class, and if you agree to take it, I'll tell you about my Ruby.

Embarrassed, Violet nods.

OLGA
Free of charge. Four weeks long.
What do you say?

VIOLET
Yeah, ok, but this was just an
accident...my eye.

OLGA
So tell me, how do you like my
Ruby?

VIOLET
Well, I hardly know her.

OLGA
Be honest. Nobody likes her. I know
that.

Violet shrugs, nodding.

OLGA
But she was a normal girl in high
school. Well, up until the night of
her junior senior. I can remember
her being so excited when she told
me that day...

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY - BEGIN FLASHBACK

RUBY
...he asked me, Mrs. T. John Jacobs
finally asked me!

OLGA (V.O.)
She was so excited. And I was
excited for her.

Ruby, at that age where testing the waters with emotions like
love was more important than breathing, acts all giddy to a
younger Olga, behind her teacher's desk.

RUBY
I've had a secret crush on him
since the seventh grade.

OLGA (V.O.)
She ran out of the classroom that
day, the happiest girl on campus.

OLGA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

For some reason she confided in me,
and as time progressed, she
continued to fill me in on the
plans...the dinner, the dress.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - JUNIOR SENIOR PROM - NIGHT

Basketball court turned dance floor. Streamers. Strobe
lights. Dry ice lets off a foggy mist. Music fills the air.

HIGH SCHOOLERS crowded around. Some talking. Some dancing.
Some couples kissing in the corner. Parent CHAPERONES in the
mix at a much lesser percentage.

Ruby stands awkwardly alone.

At the punch bowl, a gangly boy, JOHN JACOBS, dressed in his
button down, black and white polished oxfords, dips punch.

He spies around his shoulder to make sure the case is clear
then pours the contents from a flask in with the punch.

He whirls the mixture with his finger. Then heads over to his
date -- Ruby -- who smiles and eagerly takes the drink.

RUBY

Thanks.

He winks at her. A slow song comes on. He extends his arm.

JOHN

Dance? That's what we're here for,
right?

She looks for somewhere to set her punch.

JOHN

Chug it. Go ahead.

She blushes. Chugs the rest of the punch. He grabs the empty
cup, tosses it in the trash as he escorts her to the dance
floor.

They slow dance. He kisses her neck. She pulls away making
more room between them.

JOHN

You are beautiful, Ruby.

They continue dancing. By the end of the song, Ruby is
loosened up. John kisses her neck.

The song ends. He hurries her off the dance floor.

She's woozy. Nearly trips, but he's there to help her.

INT. BOY'S LOCKER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Behind a row of lockers, John and Ruby make out.

She's not as into it, but she's affected by whatever he put in the punch.

He slips the zipper down at the nape of her neck. She mumbles but her words are covered up by a kiss.

Voices from nearby. Someone is coming.

John runs his hand up under her dress. She is too weak and clumsy to stop him. He pulls her dress up over her head. It falls to the floor.

The voices grow louder.

A group of FOOTBALL PLAYERS round the lockers. Stare at Ruby standing there, bra showing. They gawk and laugh. One points.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

A class room of high schoolers. Olga gives out a lecture.

Ruby remains quiet. Reserved.

OLGA (V.O.)

I knew something was wrong that Monday. I knew that something had happened. Something terrible that changed her somehow.

The bell rings. All the high schoolers get up and rush out, Ruby included until she's intercepted at the door by Olga.

OLGA

I was expecting a report. Did everything go ok?

Ruby, eyes down, face flush, tries to dart from the conversation, but Olga doesn't let her off that easy.

OLGA

What happened? You can talk to me. Tell me anything.

Ruby wipes tears that stream down her face as Olga closes the classroom door.

INT. DOJO - BACK TO PRESENT

OLGA

She told me what happened, and there wasn't a thing she could do legally, because she wasn't raped or anything, but it crushed her spirit that night. She got a dirty reputation and back then, those things really mattered.

Olga sips her tea.

VIOLET

That is a very sad story.

OLGA

I tried to help her through it. Even took a self defense class with her in hopes it would help her confidence, but I can't say it helped at all. I ended up enjoying the class so much that I learned karate, became a black belt in my forties. And here I am today. It keeps me in shape.

VIOLET

Do you still see her? I mean, are you still someone she confides in?

Olga shakes her head, hurt.

OLGA

My little Ruby built a fortress up around her. That one event, changed her life forever. She wasn't ever the happy, hopeful Ruby that I used to know. That Ruby was gone.

Olga climbs up from the floor. Violet does the same.

OLGA

Tuesday evenings seven sharp.

Violet nods.

OLGA

I'm not going to let another one of us girls get pushed around. You can tell me anything, you know.

VIOLET

Thank you.

OLGA

Even if you don't win that money,
at least you know about the woman
you work for. I just wish there was
a way I could've reached her better
back then.

They walk towards the door. Olga slips into flip flops.
Violet pulls back on her short boots.

VIOLET

I'm not sure I'm cut out for this
stuff. Karate. Self defense.

OLGA

Don't you worry. When I get done
with you, you'll be able to kick
some ass.

Surprised at the old woman's words, Violet laughs.

EXT. SHERMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

It's dark. Violet knocks on the front door. No answer. The
sound of the TV can be heard.

She knocks again. And again. She pulls out her keys. Tries
her old key to the house.

It doesn't work, but the door opens. Abbey runs out. Sherman
stands in the doorway.

VIOLET

Hop in the car honey. I'll be right
there.

Abbey skips over, lets herself into the car.

VIOLET

I thought you said you weren't
going to change the locks until I
got all my stuff?

SHERMAN

I lost my key.

Violet picks up a clay pot on the front porch. An old key
sits underneath.

VIOLET

I'm not stupid, Sherman.

He reaches back inside, retrieves a cardboard box taped up and marked: Violet's Stuff. Hands it to Violet.

VIOLET
Seriously?

SHERMAN
Figured you may need your stuff.

INT. VIOLET'S CRAPPY CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Violet tries to cool down. Abbey flips the radio stations.

ABBEY
I'm hungry. Can we stop and get a happy meal?

VIOLET
Didn't he take you to Dairy Queen?

ABBEY
I didn't eat.

VIOLET
What do you mean? Why not?

ABBEY
Some girl showed up with bright red lip gloss. I didn't like her.

Violet angers but tries hard not to show it. Abbey points to the golden arches up ahead.

ABBEY
Chicken nuggets!

Violet flips on the blinker then turns into McDonald's.

INT. SHERMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sherman sits in front of the computer. Microsoft Word opened on his monitor.

He pecks at the keyboard. We watch as he types.

TYPED WORDS ON SCREEN: As a great business woman, Miss Morgan understood good qualities in her workers. I'll never forget that day she made me manager.

INT. VIOLET'S CRAPPY CAR - NIGHT

Violet downloads a writing app on her cell.

She looks back at a sleeping Abbey.

Installed, the writing app opens on the cell screen.

Violet starts tapping away, the light from the phone illuminates her determined and desperate face.

EXT. VIOLET'S CRAPPY CAR

A starry night over the fast food chain as the glowing golden arches click off for the night.

INT. RAMSEY HOUSE - TADPOLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The door opens. Catfish peers in at Tadpole sleeping.

CATFISH'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Catfish sits in bed, reading glasses on, note paper in hand.

Like a writer with writer's block, he stares at the blank sheet before him.

INT. CATFISH'S BEDROOM - MORNING

An alarm BLARES. Catfish fumbles for the 'off' button.

The note paper scattered in bed with him, his reading glasses half-cocked still on his face.

He sits up, steps off the bed onto the floor.

His bare feet share the space with a myriad of crumpled up eulogy attempts.

EXT. SCHOOL - MORNING

Violet's crappy car pulls up and stops by the curb.

Abbey steps out, skips up to the doors, turns back to wave at Violet. A TEACHER also waves to Violet. Then the child disappears inside.

The crappy car sputters away into morning traffic.

INT. VIOLET'S CRAPPY CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Stuck in rush hour traffic, Violet taps the steering wheel, sings along to Pharrell William's 'Happy'.

Her moment of morning joy is interrupted by a call on her phone. She downs the volume on the radio, answers her cell.

INT. SCHOOL - COUNSELORS OFFICE

A granola SCHOOL COUNSELOR woman speaks into the phone.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Good morning, Miss Capri. I was wondering if you could stop in this afternoon? There's something we need to discuss about Abbey.

INTERCUT BETWEEN COUNSELOR AND VIOLET DURING THIS CALL.

VIOLET

Is she ok??

SCHOOL COUNSELOR

She's fine. No worries. There's just something I'd rather discuss in person if you don't mind. If you could just stop in when you come to pick her up, it shouldn't take long, maybe ten or fifteen minutes.

INT. FACTORY - BREAK ROOM - MORNING

Violet pulls her time card out of the rack. Polly walks up behind her.

POLLY

We got an invite.

Violet punches in.

Polly redirects her attention to a flyer posted on the bulletin board not far from the time clock.

POLLY

That's where we're read our entries out loud. At a funeral home? Is it just me or is that morbid as hell and truly messed up?

VIOLET

I sort of get why she's a bit messed up. Now.

POLLY

Did you get yours done yet?

VIOLET

My hair girl got me an interview with this eccentric old woman that was Ruby's high school teacher.

POLLY

What? Are you serious? Isn't that cheating? Spill the beans!

VIOLET

I really don't think it's going to help me any. And I had to agree to sign up for one of her stupid classes to even get the interview...BUT I do know this. Miss Morgan was a normal teen until her junior senior. Leave it to the male species to go and screw up a girl's future.

POLLY

You know, I'm can't really buy into people who say one little thing changed them. I mean, you grow up, get over that stuff, don't you think?

Violet shrugs(not sure).

VIOLET

Apparently, she didn't ever get over it.

Sherman walks in.

Polly nods to alert Violet.

SHERMAN

You girls on the clock?

Polly rolls her eyes. They both stride out of the break room.

FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

Polly and Violet head for their stations.

VIOLET

Don't say anything to anyone about what I told you about Miss Morgan, ok?

POLLY

Sure hun, you know I got your back. Speak of the devil.

Ruby saunters in. Slower than usual. Head not as high.

She reaches her stairway, struggles up the stairs, using the handrail for support.

POLLY

She doesn't look so good. I sure hope she can make it two more days for the reading. It would suck so bad if she killed over before the contest ended.

VIOLET

Oh God, then that son of hers would get everything.

POLLY

Possibility.

Polly veers off. Violet walks alone until Sherman catches up with her.

SHERMAN

Is Abbey sick or something?

VIOLET

No. Why?

SHERMAN

I had a missed call from the school. I guess I should call'm back.

VIOLET

You don't have to. They called me on my way in, it was nothing. Something about an upcoming field trip. I took care of it.

She veers off towards her work section. He stops. Watches her. He can't see her face, but we can, and it has anxiety written all over it.

VIOLET
(mumbling to herself)
You're so not a good liar. Oh
Abbey, what have you done now?

INT. RUN DOWN HOUSE - DAY

Empty beer bottles on the coffee table. Tadpole sits on the floor in front of the TV watching cartoons.

A knock at the door. A tall African American man with BLOODSHOT EYES walks in.

BLOODSHOT EYES
Hey baby. You ready?

Natasha smiles from the couch.

NATASHA
I told you I can't leave until
Daddy picks the kid up.

Bloodshot Eyes points at Tadpole.

BLOODSHOT EYES
That one there? She big enough to
baby sit herself looks like to me.
Ain't ya, baby girl?

Tadpole says nothing.

Bloodshot Eyes walks over, coaxes a tipsy Natasha.

BLOODSHOT EYES
You got your drink on, me and the
boys shooting pull for some bank,
let's jack.

Natasha looks at the clock. Then at Tadpole.

NATASHA
You don't mind, do ya?

Unsure, Tadpole stands up. Natasha is already heading for the door. Bloodshot Eyes right beside her. Kissing her. Flirting.

NATASHA
I'm lockin' it. Don't let nobody in
until he gets here. K?

TADPOLE
He gone be mad.

Bloodshot Eyes gooses Natasha. She giggles. She's drunk.

NATASHA

Gawd girl, come on. I'll drop you
by the factory. He don't pay me
nuttin to do all this.

INT. SCHOOL - COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Violet follows School Counselor in. Takes a seat across the
desk from her.

VIOLET

What happened? What did Abbey do?

School Counselor looks up over her glasses.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Abbey did nothing, Miss Capri. It's
just we are concerned about...her
welfare.

VIOLET

Her Daddy and I are going through a
divorce. I'm sure she's told you.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Abbey said she's been sleeping in
the backseat of your car. Is this
true, Miss Capri?

Think quick. Violet flusters as she responds.

VIOLET

It was just until my check got
here. See, her Daddy pushed us out
with no where to go.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR

As a school counselor, I have to
report these things. It's nothing
against you, believe me I
understand your dilemma.

VIOLET

(sarcastic)
Do you?

SCHOOL COUNSELOR

I'm just doing my job.

Violet picks at her nails. A nervous wreck.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR

They will contact you. They'll need to verify a real address, and nothing else will come of it. You do have somewhere to stay, right?

EXT. FACTORY - AFTERNOON

Tadpole steps out of a pimped out ride that zooms out of the parking lot before she's inside.

INT. FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

A FACTORY WORKER MAN walks up to Catfish.

FACTORY WORKER MAN

Your little one is lookin' for you.

Catfish surprised. Pulls off his safety glasses. Marches towards the front of the factory.

Too late. Ruby stands by Tadpole, who looks at Catfish with this 'I'm sorry' face.

CATFISH

What you doin' here?

TADPOLE

Tasha' dropped me off, I toll her you were gonna be mad.

He looks up at Ruby.

CATFISH

I'm sorry about this, Miss Ruby. I had no idea she was gone drop'r by.

Ruby pulls Catfish to the side.

RUBY

I told you last time this wasn't a day care. I meant it, Mr. Ramsey. Now, go on home. In fact, take a week off and don't come back til you get your daycare problems straightened out.

CATFISH

But Miss Ruby...

Tadpole steps closer.

TADPOLE

It ain't his fault, Miss Ruby,
please don't make him leave.
Please!

RUBY

Goodbye.

Tadpole shoots Ruby the stank eye. Not happy as Catfish pulls her towards the exit.

Ruby stomps up the steps. Disappears in her office.

MOMENTS LATER

RUBY'S VOICE ON LOUD SPEAKER (V.O.)

(frail and broken up)
Sherman, come to my-y off..ice.

Sherman turns his head towards Ruby's office.

RUBY'S OFFICE - SECONDS LATER

A knock at the door.

RUBY (O.S.)

Get in here!

Ruby struggles on the floor like a roach on pesticide.

Sherman walks in. Shocked.

SHERMAN

Whoa! Miss Morgan! Are you ok? Want
me to call an ambulance?

He picks up the phone.

She grumbles. Her hair tussled. Face red.

RUBY

Don't you do it! Get over here and
get me up off this floor!

He hurries over. Assists her best he can, Ruby grumbling all the way up.

RUBY

We aren't going to have another
fiasco around here. Just help me to
my car.

She stumbles towards the door. Determined.

SHERMAN
But Miss Morgan...

EXT. RUBY'S OFFICE

Sherman helps Ruby down the stairs. She works hard 'not' to appear like she's being assisted.

She whispers to him.

RUBY
Hurry up. Don't make a spectacle.
Just get me out of here.

EXT. FACTORY - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

One more step and Ruby makes it to the side of her car.

She leans against the Rolls gasping out of breath. Sherman, not sure what to do.

Ruby fumbles with her keys. Drops them.

SHERMAN
Miss Morgan, you aren't going to
try to drive are you?

She attempts to get the keys from the pavement. Sherman picks them up before she even gets close.

SHERMAN
I'll drive you. Where do you need
to go?

She's not one to give in, but an older sedan pulls in the lot, and she needs to get in the car before anyone sees her like this.

Sherman escorts her to the passenger side. Helps her in.

He runs around the front of the car, jumps inside.

INT. RUBY'S ROLLS-ROYCE - LATER

An awkward silence as Sherman drives. Ruby clutches her head in the passenger seat.

RUBY

You can go to jail for what you're doing. You know that right?

Sherman taken aback by her words.

SHERMAN

Are you talking to me?

RUBY

Unless there's a ghost in here.

Awkward silence again.

RUBY

She offered me the rings, then I saw those bruises...those filthy ugly bruises...

SHERMAN

I have no idea what you are talking about.

RUBY

The girl at the factory. Valorie. No, it's Violet I think. My head's killing me.

SHERMAN

I think maybe you're confused.

She lifts her head out of her hands, glares at him.

RUBY

I know what I saw with my own eyes. You ought not hurt a woman like that. Could scar her for life.

Awkward silence as Sherman drives. Hospital in site.

He slows the car. Pulls into the emergency room drop off.

EXT. SEEDY HOTEL - NIGHT

A place where tricks are turned and drug deals go down on a daily basis.

Violet and Abbey step out of the hotel office. Stride down the breezeway hand in hand.

A SLEAZY GUY approaches them. Looks Violet up and down. Reaches into his pocket, extends some cash.

Violet storms past. Whispers under breath.

VIOLET

Creep.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Soiled carpet. Peeling wallpaper. But it's not Violet's crappy car.

Violet tucks little Abbey in bed.

ABBEY

I love hotels. Remember the last time we got to stay in a hotel? Disney World!

Abbey smiles big. Violet kisses her forehead.

VIOLET

Pancakes in the morning, as promised.

Abbey traces the number 8 on her mother's palm.

ABBEY

I really didn't mind sleeping in the car, Momma. I love you.

Violet traces an 8 onto Abbey's palm.

VIOLET

Love you, too, for infinity.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Ruby lies in the hospital bed when someone walks in.

RUBY

You people are like a bunch of vampires around here.

She turns over in bed to see Brent and a man in a SUIT.

RUBY

What are you doing here?

Suit steps forward.

SUIT

They called Mr. Morgan late last night.

RUBY

Who in the hell are you?

Brent steps forward. Papers in his hand.

BRENT

He's an attorney, Mom. I just thought he could be of some help.

SUIT

Brent suggested we square away your last will and testament. We can go over your living will also.

Ruby pulls herself up. Jerks her IV out of her arm. The monitor goes berserk beeping wildly.

BRENT

What are you doing?

RUBY

I'm getting out of here. YOU, leave me alone!

SUIT

He's your son, Miss Morgan. At a time like this, you need to communicate your wishes.

RUBY

You stay out of this. He is not my son. He's my cheating husband's love child.

BRENT

You can't just leave the hospital.

RUBY

Watch me!

A NURSE runs in. Pushes buttons on the monitor machine. Then goes to Ruby.

NURSE 3

You need to lay back down, Miss Morgan. Your doctor will be in shortly.

RUBY

Unless you are going to arrest me or something, I'm leaving.

She marches out in her hospital gown.

HALLWAY

Ruby stomps down the hall. Stops. Weak in the knees, she nearly topples over. NURSES come to her assistance.

Ruby's eyes well up. Realization of what's to come.

EXT. DRAGON DOJO ACADEMY - MORNING

Violet's crappy car sits in front of the karate school.

She picks up her cell, dials a number. Phone to her ear.

VIOLET

Polly. Hey girl. (pause) Yeah, I'm fine, I'm just going to be running a bit late, can you tell Sherman?
(pause) Thanks, I owe you.

She sets the phone down. Takes a deep breath.

INT. DRAGON DOJO ACADEMY - MOMENTS LATER

Olga in her GI uniform. Violet in her textile get-up.

Olga pours tea into two cups. Passes one to Violet. They both take a seat, a small tea table between them.

VIOLET

I'm really not good at talking or asking for anything.

OLGA

As I told you, you can talk to me about whatever. I've been around the block a time or two myself, so talk away, ask away.

LATER

Olga walks with Violet to the door.

VIOLET

Thank you so much. You don't know how much this is going to help me. You're going to love Abbey.

Olga smiles.

OLGA

Happy to help. I'm not going to let another Ruby slip away. I haven't ever stopped thinking about my Ruby. Haven't seen her in over 30 years now.

VIOLET

Maybe you should go by and see her.

INT. FACTORY - BREAK ROOM - DAY

Polly pulls folded paper out of her pocket. Unfolds them scattering eulogies on the table before Violet.

VIOLET

Wow, you really did write several.

POLLY

I told you. Now, your job is to pick your favorite. I have narrowed it down to these five. And tell me about this little place you found.

VIOLET

You'll have to stop by. It's so cute. It's like a little cottage, flower boxes. I really don't deserve it.

POLLY

Stop it. You do. I just can't believe the woman just let you move in without rent or a deposit. She doesn't even really know you.

VIOLET

Olga's good people. But she's making me work for it part time at her dojo. She says she's gonna teach me to kick some ass. Seventy years old, she's a hoot.

Polly laughs. Violet dives into reading the entries.

INT. RAMSEY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Catfish sits on the couch. Writes out bills on the coffee table. Stamps envelopes.

The phone rings.

TADPOLE (O.S.)

I got it!

Catfish turns around to see Tadpole with the phone. She holds it out. Covers the receiver with her hand. Whispers.

TADPOLE

It's Miss Ruby, Grandpa. Maybe she's gone letcha come back to work. I knew she'd come around.

Catfish puts the phone to his ear.

INT. MANSION - RUBY'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Ruby sits in a window seat staring over her property. Phone to her ear.

INTERCUT BETWEEN RUBY AND CATFISH OVER THE PHONE CALL.

RUBY

Since you're at home, I just figured you could use some work and my estate should be cleaned up.

Catfish hesitates to say anything. Is she really asking him to come help her after she laid him off work for a week?

CATFISH

I'm at home because you told me to stay away til I had my problems worked out.

RUBY

Mr. Ramsey, you either want the work or you don't.

CATFISH

Well, I got Tadpole with me, but if'n she could come stay outside with me while I spruce everything up, I reckon I could do it. I don't need ta be losing no work. Hard enough makin' it as it is.

EXT. VIOLET'S COTTAGE - AFTERNOON

A darling yellow cottage. Flower boxes under the windows. Petunias color the beds around the dwelling.

Violet unloads clothes and boxes from the trunk of her car.

Abbey pets a friendly white cat.

OLGA (O.S.)
He likes you. That's Ninja.

Abbey looks up to see Olga staring down at her.

OLGA
And I'm Olga. I live in the big
house right there.

She points to the main house.

Abbey jumps rope along the way to the back.

Box in hand, Violet stops next to Olga.

VIOLET
I can't tell you enough how much
this means to me. Seeing her happy.
She's my life. I feel like I've
been given a fresh start!

EXT. MANSION - SAME TIME

Overgrown grass in need of cutting.

Catfish buzzes by on a riding mower.

Ruby hobbles out best she can now with a walker for support.
She waves her hands, hollers to Catfish.

The mower comes to a stop.

RUBY
(trying to talk over the
mower engine)
What setting you got that blade on?

Catfish cups a hand to his ear.

She maddens. Reaches over the wheel. Jerks the key out. The
engine dies instantly.

CATFISH
Now why'd you go and do that, Miss
Ruby?

RUBY
If I've told you once I've told you
a dozen times, I don't want nobody
scalping my grass.

CATFISH

Seein' as you done laid me off work
and I still come a runnin' when you
called me to cut your grass, just
seems you could give a man a little
bit'a slack.

She hands him the key back, hobbles back to the mansion.

Tadpole watches her struggling with the walker. Skips over to Catfish.

TADPOLE

I feel sorry for her. Havin' to use
that walker and be all sick like
that, just seems sad.

CATFISH

She don't need nobody feelin' sorry
for her. Go on and play. Let me get
this here done so we can get home.

Tadpole skips off. The mower back on course.

INT. MANSION - THE STUDY - LATER

Ruby sits behind the big desk. The portrait on the wall, is a
much different person than we are looking at now.

Ruby looks as if she's lost weight. She shuffles through old
photographs. Family photographs. Black and whites.

The sound of water running.

Ruby stops with the photographs. Listens with a curious look
on her face.

She gets up, hobbles on the walker to the window. Pushes the
thick drapes back to see Catfish still at work in the field.

The running water sound stops, but is replaced by other
sounds. Dishes clinking together. Small footsteps.

Ruby hobbles out of the study, down a long...

HALLWAY

Dark. Lonely. Empty walls. Ruby follows the sound into the...

KITCHEN

A butcher knife and green stems on the butcher block. From behind the counter steps Tadpole, a smile from ear to ear on her little face as she holds out a clump of colorful flora.

RUBY

What are you doing in here?

TADPOLE

Don't worry, these ain't out'a the garden. They're wildflowers an I picked 'em just for you Miss Ruby.

Ruby stares at the flowers. For just a moment, we think Ruby's pleased but instead she takes the arrangement, pulls the flowers out of the mason jar vase, dumps the water out, then throws the wildflowers into the trash compactor and pushes the crush button.

Tadpole's smile turns into a frown.

Ruby turns and hobbles back out on her walker. Tadpole just stands staring.

INT. DRAGON DOJO ACADEMY - AFTERNOON

Olga teaches a self defense class. Demonstrates defensive blocks and kicks.

Violet, in a karate uniform, is one of the students. She actually looks more into it than any of the other adult participants.

EXT. MANSION - AFTERNOON

Ruby counts out money to Catfish.

CATFISH

Thank you, Miss Ruby. Looks a lot better around here now.

RUBY

You should teach that little girl to mind better. She snuck in my house and was cutting up a bunch of weeds with a butcher knife. A kid could get hurt like that.

CATFISH

Yes'm, I ain't cut out for raisin'
kids in these days. Can't say I did
any good with my own two girls.

He wipes sweat from his brow.

CATFISH

I been thinkin' bout puttin'
Tadpole in foster care.

Ruby shocked.

RUBY

Why would you do that?

CATFISH

She just deserves a better life.
Some kinda day care and schoolin'
and college one day. I can't give'r
that stuff.

INT. RAMSEY HOUSE - CATFISH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Catfish sits again on his bed. Reading glasses on. Note pad
in his lap. Yep, he's working on that eulogy again.

Screwed up paper balls scattered on the floor. He looks up in
frustration but that doesn't last long. Tadpole walks in with
a big glass of chocolate milk.

TADPOLE

It always helps me when I draw.
Tasha says milk does the body good.

Catfish chuckles to himself as he takes the glass from her.

She crawls up in the bed beside him. He leans over, shoves
the note pad and pen in the bedside drawer.

TADPOLE

You ain't quittin' are ya?

CATFISH

Reckon I am. Some people just ain't
cut out for writin. Money ain't
that important enough to steal a
man's honesty away.

TADPOLE

I could help.

He snuggles her against his side. Chuckles.

CATFISH

You help me plenty already,
Tadpole.

TADPOLE

What about that new dress you got
me for the party? And the pink
shoes?

CATFISH

It ain't a party, but we'll still
go, say our goodbyes, reckon it's
the right thing to do no matter
what.

INT. FACTORY - DAY

There is a special buzz in the air today. It's 'the' day of
the contest and every worker has that hope in their
step...except Ruby, who is wheeled in by Sherman.

Sherman rolls the wheelchair up the stairs backwards to get
her to her office.

RUBY'S OFFICE

Ruby motions him to put the chair by her observation window.

SHERMAN

If you need anything else at all,
Miss Morgan, just holler.

She nods.

Sherman exits.

Ruby sits in the office, alone. Watches the factory, the only
thing she's grown close to over the years. Her face seems
sad. Her skin as if draped over bones.

FACTORY

Sherman strolls across the floor. Stops by Violet.

VIOLET

I thought she said no brown nosing.

SHERMAN

I'm just doing my job as the
manager. She's the boss, at least
for now.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)

Oh by the way, I called the school back and talked to Abbey's counselor.

VIOLET

Why'd you do that? I told you everything was handled.

SHERMAN

Like the field trip?

Violet starts to storm off, but Sherman grabs her by the arm.

VIOLET

Let me go, Sherman.

SHERMAN

You've been living in your car? You could've at least dropped Abbey off with me, Vi. That's like child abuse.

VIOLET

It was only a few nights until I could get a place and you know it.

SHERMAN

And you still don't have a place, do ya?

VIOLET

I have a place, and it's nicer than yours. Let me go right now. People are watchin'.

She is red in the face. Pulls away. He doesn't let go, instead pushes her backwards. She trips, lands on her butt.

RUBY'S VOICE ON LOUD SPEAKER (V.O.)

Sherman Capri, to my office.

VIOLET

Suck up.

SHERMAN

She's already read my eulogy. I'm goin' to win tonight. And then I'm goin' to make your life a living hell.

He marches towards Ruby's office.

Polly waddles up.

POLLY

That pig! Are you ok hun?

Polly helps Violet up.

VIOLET

I'm ok, but if he wins tonight I'm going to be devastated! He's brown nosin' and she's probably goin' to pick his just cuz he's playin' caretaker. Ugh.

INT. RAMSEY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Tadpole dressed for contest night, two hours too early. She prances around the room in her patent leather pink shoes.

The phone rings.

Catfish waltzes in, picks up the phone.

While Catfish is on the phone, Tadpole puts items into her matching pocketbook. Lip gloss. Eye shadow. Hello Kitty pen.

Catfish hangs up the phone. Sits down on the couch.

TADPOLE

Who was that?

CATFISH

It was Miss Ruby. Said she had some business to discuss with me, wanted to make sure we was comin' tonight and all. With all that's happenin' I don't suspect it'll be good news.

EXT. VIOLET'S COTTAGE - SAME TIME

Violet's crappy car rolls to a stop in front of the cozy little bungalow.

Abbey jumps out first. Skips over to Ninja(the cat).

No sooner than Violet gets out, Sherman's truck pulls in to the drive and stops.

Sherman steps out. He's three sheets to the wind. Stumbling. Swearing.

SHERMAN

Now I know where you're hidin' out.

Violet walks towards her cottage.

VIOLET
I can't believe you followed me.
There are stalking laws you know.

She hurries her step but he's on her in a flash. Grabs her by the arm.

VIOLET
Let me go or I'm going to...

Sherman slurs. Obviously drunk.

SHERMAN
Going to what? Whatcha gonna do?

She tries to pull away. Embarrassed as Abbey walks over.

OLGA (O.S.)
Get in your truck now.

Sherman turns to see Olga, who ushers Abbey and Ninja into her back door.

Olga walks over stands next to Violet.

SHERMAN
Who's that, your grandmother?

Sherman laughs.

OLGA
Let her go and get off my property.

SHERMAN
This is my property.

He jerks Violet around. Olga has had enough. She moves in fast, gives him a knee thrust. He gasps for breath.

Free, Violet steps back. Olga gives him an elbow chop and a flat palm thrust to his nose.

Sherman stumbles back. Olga pulls Violet close to her.

OLGA
Remember what I taught you in class. Focus.

Sherman hurt but laughing until --

-- Violet kicks him hard in the groin. He goes down to his knees. Agony on his face. He screams.

Mad but defeated he crawls up, holding his crotch he blunders towards his truck.

Olga smiles at Violet who has a smile of her own, one of accomplishment and confidence.

OLGA

Nice kick.

Violet chuckles.

VIOLET

Thanks.

INT. ETERNITY FUNERAL HOME AND CREMATORY - NIGHT

Stanley Stopchuck pushes Ruby in her wheelchair as she barks off orders.

RUBY

Get rid of that arrangement.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK

But those are peace lilies.

RUBY

Plastic peace lilies! Fake flowers are just cheap and cheesey. I won't have them at my visitation.

He picks up the fake floral arrangement, stashes it in a storage closet.

RUBY

Let's go over the room now. I want everything to be perfect.

He wipes his brow with a monogrammed handkerchief then pushes her into the...

VISITATION ROOM

Colorful flowers everywhere, even spilling out of the shimmering casket that sits at the head of the room.

RUBY

Can you turn the music up a tad?
And fix that arrangement over there, it's not balanced.

He runs to and fro per her demands. He is sweating profusely. Constantly wipes his face with that make-up stained hanky.

EXT. ETERNITY FUNERAL HOME AND CREMATORY - NIGHT

Catfish and Tadpole walk hand in hand. They look like they're on their way to Sunday church, him in a black suit and her in a pink and black dress and shiny pink shoes.

She carries her pocketbook like an adult.

He stops before they enter. Leans down to her level.

CATFISH

I want you to be on your best
behavior in there, ya hear?

She nods.

CATFISH

Mind your manners. Remember to say
yes ma'am, yes sir, and all your
thank yous. You look'n real pretty
in that fine dress. I'm right proud
of ya, Tadpole.

She strikes a little pose. Smiles big.

Others are arriving. Cars pulling in. People from the factory
all here for one thing -- to strike it rich.

Catfish leads Tadpole into the funeral home. She waves over
her shoulder to other factory workers entering.

INT. VISITATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The room is filled with a constant hum of chatter.

Ruby sits near the back of the room in her chair. Takes turns
talking to workers, who suddenly just love her.

Tadpole touches the casket.

CATFISH

Don't touch anything.

TADPOLE

When I die, I hope I can have a
casket as pretty as this.

Catfish notices Ruby's alone finally. He takes Tadpole by the
hand, strides over to Ruby.

TADPOLE

Hey, Miss Ruby.

Ruby looks up at Catfish.

RUBY

Isn't exactly the place you bring a child.

CATFISH

Evenin' Miss Ruby. You're looking mighty pretty tonight.

RUBY

What I look like and what I feel like are two different things. Before I succumb myself to listening to all these eulogies I wanted to tell you to report to work tomorrow. You're the manager of the factory now.

CATFISH

Well I don't know what to say, Miss Ruby. Thank ya.

RUBY

You should have enough money with the salary now to cover the things you told me about.

She tilts her head towards Tadpole. Catfish smiles. Nods.

Ruby motions for Director Stopchuck. He shuffles over, leans down to her level.

RUBY

I'm ready to get started.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK

Yes Ma'am.

He claps his hands to get the crowd's attention. Excitement as they get ready for their chance at a fortune.

INT. GYPSY'S TAVERN - SAME TIME

A dark and dingy swill slinging place.

Sherman sits at the bar, empty shot glasses in front of him.

The BARKEEP starts to pour them up.

SHERMAN

I'm good.

BARKEEP

Courtesy of the guy in the fedora
over there.

Sherman looks down the bar. There sits Brent. Sherman picks up the two shots, walks down and takes the stool next to Brent. They toast. Down the whiskey.

INT. VISITATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ruby watches from her chair in the back center.

Polly stands behind the podium.

POLLY

I can remember when Miss Morgan
hired me. I came with no
references, no experience. She was
gracious and kind to give me a job
at the factory...

A LITTLE LATER

A man in a SILK VEST walks up to the podium.

SILK VEST

Ruby Mae Morgan. Intelligent. A
savvy business woman. And a mother
to us all. A woman who's smile
brightens any room...

A LITTLE LATER

VIOLET

...And sometimes in life, we have
experiences that shape us for
eternity. It's important to find
the light in everyone you
encounter, and Miss Morgan has that
light inside. Deep down inside it
burns like a beacon in the night...

CATFISH AND TADPOLE IN THE AUDIENCE

TADPOLE

(whispering)
They talkin' about Miss Ruby?

CATFISH

I reckon they are tryin' to win
that money. Now be quiet'n listen.

A LITTLE LATER

A LATINO MAN at the podium.

LATINO MAN

Forma de ser. In my native language this means the way one is. Miss Morgan has been very good to my family. She is a hero to our community providing hundreds of jobs...

A LITTLE LATER

A BLEACHED BLOND stands at the podium. Bright red lipstick.

BLEACHED BLOND

...I can remember almost quitting when she told me I had to wear my hair in a net...all I could think about was, ugh, I'm going to look like one of those lunch ladies! But over the years, I learned to love the lady I call my boss.

She sheds a fake tear. Closes as dramatic as she can.

BLEACHED BLOND

Oh Miss Ruby, I'm going to miss you so much.

As Bleached Blond finds her seat. No one else stands up. Workers look over their shoulder to see if it's time to find out who's the winner.

Chatter amongst the room.

Catfish converses with Polly until she nudges him and points to Tadpole who's carrying a chair up behind the podium.

He stands up to go stop Tadpole from ruining his new management position, but Ruby motions for him to sit down.

Tadpole disappears behind the podium.

TADPOLE (O.S.)

Excuse me. Over here.

The audience goes silent. All eyes on Tadpole, who's crawled up on the chair behind the podium.

TADPOLE

I'd like to have a go if it's ok with you, Miss Ruby?

The crowd turns for Ruby's reaction. She nods 'yes'.

TADPOLE

Me and Miss Ruby, we been friends a long long time. Grandpa used to go cut'r grass when I was just minn'a. I could spend all day in her house. She had statues and books, lots of books. She would make like she didn't like to read but I knew she liked it. She had a zillion books. And she liked readin' to me too. She'd be smokin' them cigars...

QUICK FLASH: Ruby puffs on a cigar in a smoky room. Tadpole crawls up into her lap. Opens a book.

TADPOLE

She'd always say in a low mean voice, what do YOU want? And I'd tell her, I wanna be just like you, Miss Ruby, smoke cigars, drive a fancy car. I think she liked it when I'd say that, but it was the truth. Sometimes though, Miss Ruby could be right mean. She hurt my feelings pretty bad more than once. There was one day, I picked her a whole bundle of flowers...

QUICK FLASH: Tadpole holds out the vase of wildflowers. Ruby pulls them out, drops them in the trash compactor, pushes the crush button.

TADPOLE

And she crushed them like they were trash. I wanted to cry but I just figured she must be feeling really bad inside. Maybe she was scared about dying. She was like one of them suckers with the hard candy on the outside and the delicious bubble gum on the inside.

Not a sound in the audience. You could hear a pin drop until we hear a snuffle. Stanley Stopchuck to the rescue...he holds out the tissue box for Ruby.

Tadpole watches Ruby wipe away tears. Looks like one of those people who freeze during a speech.

TADPOLE

All in all, we had more good times than bad I reckon and I love'r just the way she is. At least she don't tell no lies. She's as hard as hard candy sometimes but she ain't a fake. I love you, Miss Ruby.

Tadpole freezes again, then crawls down off her chair. Walks to the back of the room over to Ruby, who stares straight ahead as Tadpole kisses her gently on the cheek.

An awkward silence still in the room until...

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK

Refreshments are being served in the foyer. Snack time while Miss Morgan picks her favorite.

The participants disperse. Polly walks alongside Violet.

POLLY

I guess you don't have to worry about Sherman winning.

VIOLET

Yeah, I can't believe he didn't show. Even if I don't win, life is looking up for me. I got a new pad, I'm learning to kick some ass. Not going to be pushed around ever again.

POLLY

Wow, I need some of whatever you are taking!

They laugh on their way out.

FOYER

Tadpole fills a small plate up with sweets until Catfish pulls her back from the table.

CATFISH

I told you to mind your manners. Them eulogies were just for the folks in the contest.

TADPOLE

I know, Grandpa. I just couldn't sit back and listen to them people standin' up there tellin' a bunch of lies about Miss Ruby.

He can't mad at her for telling the truth.

VISITATION ROOM - THE WINNER ANNOUNCED

The audience all on the edge of their seats. Ruby still sits back center. She looks tired.

Director Stopchuck swaggers to the podium, he twists the end of his mustache into a curl matching his smile. He holds an envelope in his hands like this is some sort of Oscar.

Anticipating, eager to hear if they have become a millionaire, every person is anxious.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK

And the winner is...

He opens the envelope. Pulls out a small card.

DIRECTOR STOPCHUCK

Willamena "Tadpole" Ramsey!

Gasps in the audience. Catfish shocked. Chatter turns into a steady hum.

Tadpole turns and shoots a big smile at Ruby.

Ruby doesn't smile back. She motions for Stopchuck to come for her.

He hurries over and pushes her out of the visitation room.

EXT. MANSION - DAY

Tadpole picks wildflowers one at a time.

INT. MANSION - RUBY'S BEDROOM - DAY

A bedroom made hospital room. Hospice NURSES tend to Ruby, now in bed. Thinner. Her skin pasty pale.

EXT. MANSION - DAY

Tadpole steps up on the big front porch where Catfish rocks in a rocking chair.

CATFISH

Just give her them flowers and come on out. Miss Ruby don't like nobody in her house.

Tadpole nods. Walks in.

INT. MANSION - THE STUDY - MOMENTS LATER

Tadpole sets the clumps of flowers down on the desk. Eyes a book on the shelf.

She crawls up the bookshelves, reaches for the book.

RUBY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Only one HOSPICE NURSE in the room with Ruby.

Tadpole peers into the door.

HOSPICE NURSE

Miss Morgan, you have a little visitor.

Ruby doesn't look up. She lies in bed, out of it. Her eyes are open, but she's had enough pain meds to make anyone comatose.

Tadpole walks over to the bed.

TADPOLE

Hey Miss Ruby, it's me, Tadpole. I picked you some wildflowers.

Tadpole extends the pretty flowers. Ruby doesn't blink. Doesn't move. Tadpole looks up to the Hospice Nurse.

HOSPICE NURSE

She can hear you. She's just restful. I'll let you two have some time alone.

The Hospice Nurse walks out.

Tadpole crawls up into the bed next to Ruby. She lays the flowers on Ruby's pillow beside her.

Tadpole opens the book and begins to read.

As Tadpole is reading, Ruby reaches out of the blankets with a fragile hand. Tadpole takes Ruby's hand in hers.

A tear rolls down Ruby's face. Tadpole takes a tissue and wipes the tears away.

We fade out on Catfish who's standing in the doorway watching Tadpole with Miss Ruby.

CATFISH

They say tears have a wisdom all
they own. But when it's all said
and done, I reckon it's better to
be hated for who ya are than be
loved for who you ain't.

FADE OUT