

"PORCHES"

By

Matthew Crump

2500 University Hghts
Box No. 6453
(828) 764-7274
mcrump@unca.edu

FADE IN:

FLASHBACK - CHILDHOOD MEMORY

A man's silhouette is reflected in a young girl's eyes. Her mouth opens to scream but nothing comes out. The silhouette inside her pupil falls.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

PRESENT DAY

A school bell rings and the same pair of eyes blinks. A hand wearing a cheap engagement ring signs the bottom of a "Withdrawal from High School" form.

MARLA MABE, 18, petite with curly hair, finishes signing her name on the bottom line and puts her hand to her mouth as if she's about to get sick. Across from her behind a desk sits PRINCIPAL SUMMERS, a middle aged man in a bleak khaki suit.

MR. SUMMERS

Miss Mabe? Are you alright?

MARLA

I'm just --

Marla lurches as if she's about to vomit. She manages to hold it down and compose herself.

MARLA (CONT'D)

... feeling a little sick this morning.

MR. SUMMERS

Right, of course... well this is all I need from you Miss Mabe.

Mr. Summers takes the signed form from her and puts it in a folder on his desk.

MR. SUMMERS (CONT'D)

I'll see you -- well, I hope you have a good -- Just best of luck.

Marla gets up and puts her backpack over her shoulder.

MR. SUMMERS (CONT'D)

And Marla?

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

Hm?

MR. SUMMERS

Tell Earl I said hello.

MARLA

I'll do that, Mr. Summers.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Marla shoves the contents of her old locker into her backpack until she stumbles upon a picture still pinned up with a magnet. The picture is of Marla and a boy, who is kissing her on the cheek.

She takes the photo down and a small smile spreads on her face. As she starts to tear up, a student comes out of a nearby bathroom and Marla quickly wipes her eyes. She folds up the picture and puts it in her pocket.

Marla walks down the hallway and empties her backpack into a trashcan. During the process she lurches and throws up into it. After she's finished, she wipes her mouth with a piece of notebook paper, then just drops her backpack in the bin.

Marla finishes walking down the hall and, on her way to the front door, she sees her sister, MEL MABE through a cracked door to the classroom. Mel grips a LOCKET shaped like a red M&M around her neck and gives a sympathetic wave. Marla grips an identical locket around her own neck and waves back.

EXT. FRONT OF SCHOOL - DAY

A rusty truck with the engine running is parked at the bottom of the school steps, halfway on the sidewalk. Marla slides into the passenger seat next to JACKSON PUCKETT, 21 with shaggy hair, tinted aviator glasses and a cigarette dangling from his lip. The bed of the truck is loaded up with boxes of her belongings.

JACKSON

(without looking over)

Summers give you any shit?

MARLA

No.

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON

Yeah? Well good. Wanna drag?

Jackson offers her his cigarette, but Marla shakes her head, lurches slightly and puts her hand up to her mouth.

MARLA

Not right now.

Jackson shrugs his shoulders, puts the cigarette back in his mouth and peels away from the sidewalk, leaving skid marks in his path.

EXT. JACKSON'S TRAILER - DAY

Jackson and Marla arrive at the trailer and Jackson parks his truck in the dirt driveway. He gets out and starts taking the boxes out of the back of the truck and putting them on the front lawn.

MARLA

You're not gonna help me carry them inside?

JACKSON

Babe, I told you I'm meeting the guys at O'Henry's. They're already waiting.

MARLA

You can't tell them you're busy? It's not every day you move your fiancé in.

JACKSON

(still moving boxes)
I don't know where you want all this shit. Besides, you didn't exactly give much notice.

MARLA

Really, Jackson? How was I supposed to know her reaction would be to kick me out?

Exasperated, Marla puts her weight on her hip and slides a hand into her back pocket.

MARLA (CONT'D)

I knew she wasn't gonna be mother-of-the year but --

(CONTINUED)

Marla feels the folded up picture in her pocket and pulls it out to look at it as Jackson interrupts her.

JACKSON

Listen, are you gonna start helping or what? Because the longer you stand there bitching, the longer I'm making Jerry and them wait at the bar.

Marla looks at the picture of her and a younger Jackson, then back up at Jackson who is throwing a box down from the bed of the truck. A pile of clothes spills out but he keeps moving the boxes. After a moment, Marla folds the picture back up and begins to pick up clothes.

Jackson puts the last box on the lawn and rushes over to get in the truck. As he goes to slam the door, Marla calls out to him from the front porch where she's plopping a box down.

MARLA

Aren't you forgetting something?

Marla knocks on the front door.

JACKSON

Oh. Right.

Jackson takes the key to the trailer off his key ring and tosses it to Marla from the truck window.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

I'll see ya tonight.

MARLA

Don't stay out too --

Marla is interrupted by the sound of Jackson's engine revving and pulling out of the driveway, kicking up dirt behind it.

INT. JACKSON'S TRAILER - DAY

Marla drags the last, heavy box through the doorway and into the dark trailer. She opens the curtains and looks out the window at the house at the top of the hill.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Marla sits at a small table under the porch light surrounded by piles of empty boxes. She paints her toenails and talks on a telephone. The cord is stretching out of the front door and the receiver is tucked between her head and shoulder.

MARLA

Yeah, Jackson Puckett... he's kinda short, longish hair, I think he had on a Black Sabbath t-shirt.

Marla notices the neighbor, LAINA RAMOS, at the trailer adjacent to her come out onto a front porch covered with an assortment of flowers. She is a tall, latina, young artist-type. Laina gives a polite wave. Marla puts the cap on her nail polish and waves back.

MARLA (CONT'D)

Two hours ago?

She checks her watch.

MARLA (CONT'D)

We're only 15 minutes down the road. Did he say where he was going next?

Marla struggles to light a cigarette with an almost empty lighter as she continues holding the phone with her shoulder.

MARLA (CONT'D)

No that's okay, thanks though. Have a good night.

While still trying the lighter she's startled by a voice coming from between the wooden bars on the front porch.

LAINA (O.S.)

Need a light?

MARLA

Jesus Christ!

Marla jumps and the telephone ricochets from her shoulder back to the front door that it was stretching out of.

LAINA

(laughing)

Sorry about that. Well, do you or don't you?

(CONTINUED)

The neighbor holds an aflame lighter out through one of spaces between the wooden bars.

MARLA
Are you trying to kill me?

LAINA
I'm trying to be a friendly neighbor.

MARLA
That so? Well thanks.

Marla lights her cigarette and slips it between her lips.

MARLA (CONT.)
And who do I have to thank for this act of kindness?

LAINA
I'm Laina; Laina Ramos. Who just thanked me?

MARLA
Marla Mabe.
(exhaling smoke)
The newest tenant of Puckett Parkway.

Marla flicks her cigarette into an ashtray on the table and holds her hand out, down towards Laina. She shakes it through the wooden bars of the porch.

LAINA
Moving in with the landlord's son?

MARLA
Yep. I'm the fiancé.

She turns her hand over to show the cheap ring.

LAINA
Oh my, what's it like to be royalty?

MARLA
We pay rent just like you do. The Puckett's don't cut Jackson much slack.

LAINA
From the sounds of that phone call, maybe they shouldn't.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

Do you normally eavesdrop on other people's conversations?

Laina puts her hands up in surrender.

LAINA

Damn. My mistake.

Marla takes a long drag of her cigarette and Laina starts to turn away. She calls after her and Laina turns back around.

MARLA (CONT'D)

Look, I'm sorry, alright? I'm just worried is all. Jackson's friends are assholes.

LAINA

It's fine... I hope he's okay.

MARLA

Yeah, me too.

After an awkward silence Marla checks her watch again and starts to get up.

MARLA (CONT'D)

I don't guess there's much use waiting out here any longer.

She puts the cigarette out in the ashtray on the table.

MARLA (CONT'D)

Thanks again for the light.

LAINA

Yeah, no problem. I really do hope he's okay.

MARLA

Thanks. It was nice meeting you, um... remind me your name?

LAINA

Laina. Nice meeting you too, Marla Mabe.

Marla gives a polite wave back to Laina and closes the door to the trailer.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jackson drunkenly stumbles into the bedroom and lays down in the bed next to Marla, waking her up. She checks the clock on the nightstand which reads 4:00 AM. Jackson begins to snore.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Jackson and Marla are woken up by a pounding on the front door. Jackson gets out of bed in his underwear and leaves the room to answer the door. Jackson's father, EARL PUCKETT, is at the door, Marla sits up in bed and listens to their yelling from the next room over.

EARL (O.S.)
(booming southern accent)
What the hell Jackson?! Boy, get
some goddamn clothes on! We have to
be at work in 15 minutes.

JACKSON (O.S.)
Alright, Jesus, calm down!

EARL (O.S.)
Tell me to calm down? I oughtta
slap the shit out of you!

Jackson comes back into the bedroom and digs through the dresser drawers as Marla gets out of bed.

INT. ENTRYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Marla comes out of the bedroom and into the entryway where Earl has his back turned. He is a larger, stronger and older looking version of Jackson. He's wearing a blue work shirt with a name patch sewn onto it.

EARL
Bout damn time! Let's hit the roa--

Earl turns around and, seeing Marla, changes his composure.

EARL (CONT'D)
Oh. Sorry, Mar. I thought --

MARLA
Jackson'll be ready in just a sec.

(CONTINUED)

EARL
Alright, thanks.

Silence. Marla shuffles her feet and Earl rubs his neck.

EARL (CONT'D)
You get moved in okay?

MARLA
Yeah, I'm mostly unpacked.

EARL
None of the neighbors giving you
any trouble, huh? Cause if they are
I can always --

Marla shakes her head no.

EARL (CONT'D)
... Well, you just say the word.
You have any problems, any at all,
just say the word.

MARLA
Thanks, Earl.

EARL
You know I'd do anything for you --
and Jackson. And you can count on
seeing me at least once a month for
that check.

Earl laughs at his own joke and playfully jabs at Marla's shoulder. His hand lingers at her arm, touching her elbow.

EARL (CONT'D)
You know where to find me.

Jackson comes rushing out of the bedroom buttoning his blue work shirt. Earl's hand snaps away from Marla and he starts out of the front door.

EARL (CONT'D)
Alright boy, let's get going!

JACKSON
See ya, Mar.

Jackson gives her a peck on the cheek on his way out the door. Marla waves and watches the two get in Earl's truck and speed away. She reaches for the telephone on the wall and twirls the cord in her fingers, contemplating, before finally dialing.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

Hey, Mel? I have a proposal.

Marla reaches for Jackson's car keys on the wall by the door.

EXT. MABE HOUSE - DAY

Marla parks Jackson's truck in front of her old house. She stares somberly at the house until the door opens and Mel comes out, calling something out back over her shoulder. Her clothes and hairstyle are similar to Marla's.

After shutting the door, Mel drops her bookbag in the bushes by the sidewalk and slides in the passenger seat.

MEL

I'm so glad you called.

Mel leans over and hugs her sister.

MARLA

I'm glad it was you that picked up.

They end their embrace and touch their M&M lockets together. Mel shuts the passenger seat door behind her.

MEL

I have a huge chemistry test today.

MARLA

Not anymore.

Marla cranks the engine, looks over to Mel and kicks the truck into drive.

MARLA (CONT'D)

Let the hooky begin.

Mel grins as Marla pulls back onto the road.

INT. JACKSON'S TRUCK - DAY

Marla drives while Mel lets the scrunchy out of her hair and checks her reflection in the passenger seat.

MARLA

I'm surprised you were able to make it out undetected.

(CONTINUED)

MEL

Well, mom thinks you're Kristi.

MARLA

How is she?

MEL

Who, Kristi?

Marla flashes Mel an annoyed look which she catches just as she's closing the car mirror.

MEL (CONT'D)

Mom's mom, does it matter?

MARLA

I just want to know how she's dealing with it.

MEL

She's definitely still seething about being promoted to grandma.

MARLA

So... I guess I should make Puckett Parkway my permanent address.

MEL

Looks like it. I mean, you know how mom is. When her mind is made up, well...

MARLA

And she made up her mind about me a long time ago.

Marla stops at a stop sign and keeps starting straight ahead, gripping the steering wheel. A silence hangs.

MEL

I know I can't speak for her but, personally, I'm psyched to be an aunt.

A half smile forms on Marla's face but she doesn't look over.

MARLA

Yeah?

MEL

You'd have to blind me to keep me from seeing that baby. And even

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MEL (cont'd)
then I'd probably find some freaky
robot eyes like in Terminator.

MARLA
That'd give a whole new meaning to
"Hasta la vista, baby."

EXT. SWEETWATER MALL - DAY

Marla pulls the truck into a parking place. She and Mel get
out and walk into the mall.

INT. SWEETWATER MALL - CONTINUOUS

Marla and Mel walk through the mall past various kiosks.

MARLA
You know, I really will need you
around once it gets here.

MEL
I already told you, I'm not
planning on going anywhere.

Mel stops at a kiosk selling jewelry and fiddles with a
ring.

MEL (CONT'D)
Besides, it's not like I could if I
wanted to. I'll be lucky to pass
driver's ed.

MARLA
I just want to make sure you're
not... I don't know, embarrassed or
something.

Mel puts the ring down and gives Marla a look of disbelief.

MEL
Oh, get real.

MARLA
I'm sure it's not easy being the
sister of the knocked up senior
drop-out.

MEL
Do you think I really give a shit
about what the kids at school
think? Don't worry about me.

(CONTINUED)

Mel picks up two pairs of earrings, one in each hand, and holds them up to her face.

MEL (CONT'D)

Now... which of these says "badass Aunt Mel?"

Mel puts the earrings back and the girls keep moving along through the mall.

MARLA

It really means a lot to me how cool you're being about this.

MEL

Yeah, yeah.

MARLA

I'm serious. I couldn't ask for a cooler little sister.

MEL

God, are the hormones supposed to be kicking in this early?

MARLA

Oh, shut up --

Mel stops walking and directs Marla's attention to a photo booth on the other side of the mall.

MARLA (CONT'D)

Should we?

MEL

It's tradition.

They scurry over to the booth and Marla starts putting quarters in.

MEL (CONT'D)

Listen, I'm willing to be your nanny and all, but isn't Jackson supposed to be your runner up?

MARLA

Jackson might take a little longer. He's never been the nurturing type.

MEL

Well, I hope he knows how to nurture a hangover.

Marla stops putting the last quarter in and looks at Mel.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA
 (cautiously)
 What do you mean?

The last quarter drops and Marla pushes the curtain back. Mel gets in under her arm and Marla follows behind her.

INT PHOTO BOOTH

MEL
 I saw the receipt from the pub in the truck; it was longer than my arm.

MARLA
 Well he went out last night. He probably bought a round for the guys.

The girls pose for the first picture. The camera flashes.

MEL
 Oh, I'm sure.

MARLA
 Mel. It's not a big deal.

MEL
 You're right; I forgot alcoholism is part of the American dream.

Second pose, second camera flash.

MEL (CONT'D)
 What time did he come dragging in? Did he even help you unpack?

MARLA
 Well no, but he had already told the guys -- well he didn't know where my shit, I mean, my stuff would go --

Both of the girls are unprepared for the third camera flash. Mel is unfazed and continues talking.

MEL
 That piece of shit. Not even one day in and he's making his pregnant fiancé do all the heavy lifting while he goes out drinking with his bud --

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

What do you want from me?! It's not
like I can leave him!

Marla ducks out of the curtain as the last camera flash
catches Mel alone in the photo booth.

EXT PHOTO BOOTH

Marla leans against the photo booth crying. Mel climbs out
of the booth.

MEL

Marla, I'm sorry, alright? All I'm
saying is he needs to get his act
together before Jackson Jr. hits
the scene.

MARLA

(sniffing)
He will. I know he will.

MEL

Ok, he will. I'm just making sure.

Marla wipes her tears and tries to recompose herself. Mel
picks up the two copies of the photo booth pictures and
hands one to Marla.

MEL (CONT'D)

Alright, was there something you
needed to actually get from here?

MARLA

I need new shoes.

Mel looks down at Marla's shoes.

MEL

I'd say so. Those are worse than
mom's orthos.

Marla wipes her tears and stifles laughter.

INT. SUPER SHOE STORE - DAY

Marla tries on a pair of WHITE SNEAKERS and Mel puts a
quarter in a bubblegum machine. Mel watches the piece of gum
travel down the spiral ramp as Marla laces up the shoes and
walks around the aisle.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

What do you think?

Mel glances over and the gum ball hits the bottom of the ramp. She takes it out and pops it into her mouth.

MEL

They're really... white.

MARLA

New shoes for a new me.

MEL

(chewing)

Sure, they're real nice.

THE SALES COUNTER

Marla purchases the white sneakers from the apathetic SALES GIRL. Marla pays with crumpled bills from her purse. While the sales girl smoothes them out, Marla notices a stack of job applications on the counter.

MARLA

Are you guys hiring?

SALES GIRL

Mhm.

MARLA

Do you mind if I...?

SALES GIRL

Be my guest.

Marla fills out an application, then picks up the box of shoes she just bought.

INT. FOOD COURT DINER - DAY

Marla and Mel eat at a bar in a 50s themed diner in the food court. Marla has her new shoes on. Mel digs into a hamburger while Marla picks at a plate of fries.

MEL

And to think, I could be suffering through Taco Tuesday right now.

MARLA

(distant)

Yeah, I love this place.

(CONTINUED)

MEL

Try to contain your excitement.

MARLA

I'm just feeling a little sick.

MEL

Oh, right. I guess morning sickness doesn't stop for the afternoon.

There's a silence while Marla struggles to eat.

MEL (CONT'D)

I'll get you a burger to-go.

MARLA

That's ok, Mel, don't worry about it.

Mel calls over the waiter behind the bar. The sound of Mel making the order fades out as Marla looks over her shoulder at other parts of the food court.

She see's a baby store and a mother pushing a carriage out of it. She watches as the baby drops its bottle. The mother picks it back up and gives the baby a kiss. Mel snaps her fingers in front of Marla's face to get her attention.

MEL

What do you say?

MARLA

Huh? Sorry.

MEL

I asked if I could drive us home in Jackson's truck?

MARLA

Oh, I'm not sure...

MEL

Please! He doesn't even have to know. I really need to start practicing.

MARLA

Why can't you practice with the car mom's holding hostage from me?

MEL

She won't go near it. I don't know if it's because of you or because she's scared of my driving.

(CONTINUED)

The waiter places a doggy bag with Marla's burger on the counter. She gets back out her wad of bills to pay him.

MEL (CONT'D)
Besides, I want my big sister to teach me.

MARLA
Oh, give me a break.

MEL
Pleeeeeease?

Marla takes a beat then looks back over her shoulder at the baby store.

MARLA
Oh alright. Here are the keys.

MEL
Thank you!

Mel snatches away the keys with a jingle and Marla gets up from the stool, taking the doggy bag.

MARLA
I'm gonna have to go to the bathroom, just meet me at the truck in thirty.

MEL
You got it.

MARLA
And don't try leaving without me.

INT. SWEETWATER MALL - DAY

Marla walks through the food court, past the bathrooms and goes straight to the baby store, BABY BLUES.

INT. BABY BLUES STORE - CONTINUOUS

Marla walks into the store with a bit of hesitation when an overly-cheery, middle-aged saleswoman, pops out from behind a clothes rack.

SALES WOMAN
Hi!

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

Oh shit!

SALES WOMAN

Whoopsie, sorry to scare ya,
darlin'! Can I help you find
anything?

MARLA

No, that's ok. Um, thank you
though.

SALES WOMAN

Alrighty! If you need me just
hollar!

Marla halfheartedly looks through baby clothes, first looking through some blue clothes, switching over to pink, then back to blue. She spots the parenting books in the back of the store and walks over.

She picks up a parenting book on display and starts leafing through. Marla turns over to the back of the book and her eyebrows raise. She pulls out her wallet and counts what's left of her wad of cash.

After a moment's contemplation, she leans out of the aisle to see the sales woman hanging up clothes on the other side of the store. Marla puts the wad of cash in place of where the book was on display, hurriedly picks off the sticker on the back of the book and slips it into her purse.

Marla starts to walk out of the store a little too quickly when the sales woman pops back out from behind a clothes rack.

SALES WOMAN

Have a beautiful baby blue day!

MARLA

(nervously)

Yeah, you too!

Marla exits the store without turning around, clutching her purse tight to her stomach.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Marla lays on the couch, reading the parenting book by the window. Jackson enters, unbuttons his work shirt, plops down in the recliner, turns on the TV next to Marla and lets out a long sigh.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA
Work go ok?

JACKSON
Yeah, if ok means hearing about
what a shitty son you are.

MARLA
You're not a shitty son.

JACKSON
Clue dad in for me will ya? He's in
love with you.

MARLA
(nervously)
I don't know about that. Earl's
just doing what dad's do.

JACKSON
Like you would know.

Jackson's comment takes Marla by surprise. She closes her book and tries to hide her emotion. After an awkward silence Jackson takes notice.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Shit, Mar, I didn't mean that. It's
just been a long day. Believe me,
if your dad had been like mine,
you'd be lucky to not have him
around anymore.

MARLA
Sure.

JACKSON
(under his breath)
Shit.

Jackson leans back in his recliner and shuts his eyes.

JACKSON
Don't be mad. I just need a nap
before we have to head up there.

MARLA
Wait, what?

Jackson opens his eyes and sits up in the recliner a bit to look at her.

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON

Oh. Yeah, dad wants us to come to dinner tonight. Said we should make it a weekly family thing.

MARLA

Family thing?

JACKSON

I know, it's a crock of shit. All of a sudden he's a family man now that you're here.

Marla jumps up from the couch and goes into the kitchen.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

What's the problem?

MARLA (O.S.)

I didn't know we'd be going to dinner! I have to bring something.

JACKSON

Babe, mom'll make plenty of food.

MARLA (O.S.)

You always have to bring something to dinner, Jackson. Especially with the in-laws. The book says so.

JACKSON

What in the hell -- what book?

Marla ignores the question and rushes around the kitchen, pulling things out of the cabinets.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

Whatever.

He leans back into the recliner and shuts his eyes.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Marla sits on a bar stool reading the book, then, after sniffing the air she runs over to the stove. A plume of smoke greets her upon opening it. She grabs what's left of a pie plate with an oven mitt, then picks up a cooking timer and hits it against the counter.

It starts ringing and she struggles to shut it off. The timer wakes up Jackson and he comes walking into the kitchen, still drowsy. He eyes the pie Marla just pulled out of the oven.

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON
... Is that what you're bringing?

MARLA
I guess so.

JACKSON
Alright, well wrap it up, we need
to head out.

Jackson leaves the kitchen and Marla waves the smoke away from the pie with the oven mitt. She puts her head down on the counter, defeated.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Jackson smokes on the porch. When Marla comes out of the trailer he puts out his cigarette and takes a second look at the pie.

MARLA
Is it that bad?

JACKSON
Well... it's not great. C'mon,
let's go.

The two walk down the porch, past Jackson's truck and towards the house at the top of the hill.

EXT. PUCKETT HOUSE - NIGHT

Jackson rings the doorbell to the front door and the two wait patiently until SHELLY PUCKETT answers the door. She's in her late 40's, dressed primly and is starting to wrinkle in the face.

SHELLY
I was beginning to think you might
not show.

JACKSON
Sorry ma.

Jackson hugs Shelly and kisses her on the forehead.

SHELLY
It's alright. It would've only been
your loss, I made your favorite.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA
 (nervously)
 Hi Shelly.

SHELLY
 Yes, hello Marla.

MARLA
 I know it's not much but I, um, I
 cooked this up last minute.

Marla hands the pie to Shelly. She wrinkles her nose.

SHELLY
 Oh, well thank you Marla. I suppose
 it's the thought that um....

Shelly leans her head back in the doorway and yells down the
 hall.

SHELLY (CONT'D)
 Earl!

EARL (O.S.)
 Coming!

SHELLY
 (to Jackson and Marla)
 C'mon now. Don't just stand out
 there, get inside you two.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The four sit around the dining room table, the only sounds
 being the clinking of silverware against the china plates.
 Jackson finally breaks the silence.

JACKSON
 This is real good, Ma.

SHELLY
 Thank you Jackie.

More silence. Marla reaches for a gravy boat in the middle
 of the table and pours some more on her plate.

MARLA
 This gravy is delicious, Shelly. I
 can't get enough.

(CONTINUED)

SHELLY
Just be sure not to spill any on
the tablecloth.

Marla laughs nervously, followed by familiar silence.

EARL
So, you and Jackson have everything
unpacked?

MARLA
I think so.

SHELLY
Mm. And Jackie, how was work?

Earl chuckles from the opposite end of the table. Jackson
flashes a look to his father.

JACKSON
Good ma, it was good.

EARL
Just peachy.

SHELLY
Do you have something you'd like to
say, Earl?

EARL
Nothing Jackson hasn't already
heard.

JACKSON
Yeah, I've heard plenty.

EARL
Just remember who collects the
rent, boy.

SHELLY
Earl, honestly. You weren't even 10
minutes late this morning.

JACKSON
Besides, what does it matter? Don't
you make your own hours?

Earl slams his fist on the table and comes out of his chair
a bit.

(CONTINUED)

EARL
That's not the goddamn point!

SHELLY
Earl!

A tense silence hangs in the air. Earl picks his fork back up and starts eating but Jackson sits on the other end of the table, arms crossed, looking at his father.

MARLA
I applied for a job today.
Everyone at the table looks at Marla, shocked.

MARLA (CONT'D)
(nervous)
Sorry, maybe this isn't the best time.

Another brief silence, they process the news.

EARL
No, don't be sorry. I think that's great. Shows a real work ethic.
(looking at Jackson)
A damn good work ethic.

MARLA
Well, I didn't mean to --

JACKSON
Why I am I just now hearing about this?

MARLA
I guess I forgot to mention --

EARL
Where did you apply to Marla?

MARLA
Just a, uh, shoe store in the mall.

JACKSON
You took my truck out today?

MARLA
Well you weren't using it, I didn't think you would mind.

The dinner falls back into silence. Jackson is visibly angry and Shelly gently puts her hand on his arm.

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON
Jesus... you know what, it's not even about the truck. Why do you need a goddamn job?

SHELLY
(soothingly)
Shh, Jackie.

JACKSON
No, Ma! She's pregnant for chrissakes!

SHELLY
I agree with you honey but just calm down.

MARLA
(softly)
I'm not even sure I'll get it.

JACKSON
Well if you do you aren't taking it.

EARL
Alright now, Marla can do as she pleases. You can't keep her locked up in the tower all day.

SHELLY
Earl, your input really isn't needed.

EARL
Well she oughta be able to get out!
At least she wants to work.
(to Jackson)
Wish I could say the same for you.

Jackson jumps up from the table.

JACKSON
Oh fuck you!

SHELLY
Jackson! Sit down! And Earl, the girl is pregnant! She can't be working.

EARL
So? She's just selling shoes!

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

(louder)

I'm not even sure I'll get it.

SHELLY

Marla, please. You've done enough.

(to Earl)

Can I see you in the kitchen?

Shelly and Earl go into the kitchen while Marla and Jackson sit at the table in rigid silence. Arguing is heard through the wall. Earl comes back out first and sits down at the dinner table, arms crossed.

Shelly follows a moment later and puts two pies on the table, one Marla's and the other a much nicer looking version she made herself. A defeated look washes over Marla's face as everyone at the table looks at the two pies in silence.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Marla wakes up early the next morning, Jackson still sleeping fast beside her. She slips on a bathrobe and makes her way into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Marla finishes packing Jackson's bag lunch just as the coffee stops brewing. She get the pot and pours a cup as Jackson emerges from the bedroom in uniform.

MARLA

Just in time.

Marla tries to hand Jackson the cup of coffee but he walks right by her, picking up the bag lunch instead. He tries to keep walking but Marla meets him on the other side of the kitchen island, she grabs his arm gently.

MARLA

Jackson, come on. Are you still mad about last night?

Jackson yanks his arm away from her.

MARLA

(to herself)

Never go to bed angry.

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON

What?

MARLA

(louder)

Never go to bed angry. The book says to never go --

JACKSON

Does the book also say to start price tagging Reeboks during the first trimester?

MARLA

Listen, I'm not in school anymore, I don't have any friends here. I need this, Jackson.

Marla gets close to Jackson, tugging on the sleeve of his work shirt. He actively avoids her eye contact.

JACKSON

Right.

MARLA

It's not that you don't make enough money.

JACKSON

Are you just about done? I have to go to work.

There's a pause, Marla tries to make eye contact but gives up and resorts to giving him a peck on the cheek.

MARLA

I'm done. Have a good day at work.

Jackson takes his lunch and leaves. Marla sits at the kitchen window with his cup of coffee and watches the truck drive away. She tries a sip but spits it back out. After a few moments looking at the coffee, she pours it out in the sink and gets up with new rigor.

MONTAGE - MARLA CLEANING

-- INT. BATHROOM - DAY -- Marla gets out of the shower, into her bathrobe and wipes away the foggy mirror.

-- INT. BEDROOM - DAY -- Marla gets dressed, tying her hair back in a bandanna and putting on her new sneakers. She takes her walkman out of a dresser drawer, puts on her headphones and presses play.

(CONTINUED)

-- INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY -- Marla vacuums.

-- INT. KITCHEN - DAY -- She cleans out the fridge.

-- INT. ENTRYWAY - DAY -- Marla washes the window by the front door then picks up her cleaning supplies.

-- EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY -- Marla sweeps off the porch and takes all the cardboard boxes to a nearby dumpster.

END MONTAGE

EXT. TRAILER - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Marla walks back to the trailer and starts to wash one of the exterior windows but she struggles to reach it. Laina comes up behind her and touches her shoulder.

LAINA (O.S.)
Need a hand?

MARLA
Shit!

Marla jumps and her headphones fall off.

MARLA (CONT'D)
Why do you keep doing that?!

LAINA
(Laughing)
I promise it's not on purpose. It is kind of fun though.

Marla picks her headphones up off the ground, puts them around her neck and stops her walkman.

MARLA
So it's fun nearly making me wet myself?

LAINA
You sure you aren't just jumpy?

MARLA
Are you gonna help me or not?

Laina's laughter dies off and she brings over a small step ladder from her yard. She tucks her long skirt into her waistband then takes the rag from Marla and cleans the top of the window with ease.

(CONTINUED)

LAINA
I knew I bought this ladder for something.

MARLA
All to help me wash a few windows.

LAINA
Who said anything about a few? This is a one and done deal.

Laina walks over to the next window and starts wiping. Marla holds the bucket and Laina dips the rag in.

LAINA (CONT'D)
So what's with the spring cleaning? You know you're in the wrong season right?

MARLA
The place just needed a little bit of freshening up.

LAINA
Nobody takes that many bags of trash out to the dumpster to just "freshen up."

MARLA
(playfully)
Oh, have you been watching me?

LAINA
Don't flatter yourself. I'm just a chain smoker.

The two move down to the next window and start cleaning.

MARLA
I've noticed. You seem to spend more time on your front porch than you do inside your trailer.
(looking at porch)
Although, with a porch like that I can't blame you. Quite the garden.

LAINA
Well it's a hobby.

Laina looks down at Marla.

(CONTINUED)

LAINA (CONT'D)
I like to surround myself with
beautiful things.

MARLA
That it is.

Marla turns back and sees Laina looking down at her.

MARLA (CONT'D)
B-beautiful I mean.

LAINA
Your place might could use a flower
pot or two.

They move down to the next window.

MARLA
(confused)
My place? I guess it is mine now,
too... Well let's just focus on
getting it clean first.

LAINA
So, why do you have the cleaning
bug?

MARLA
Well, Jackson's mad because I
applied to this job at the mall. I
thought if he came home to a
spotless house then he might --
never mind, it's stupid.

LAINA
You're right, that is stupid.

MARLA
What?

LAINA
You doing all this to try and
please him. If you want to get a
job that's your business.

The two move down to the next window before Marla has a
chance to say anything.

LAINA (CONT'D)
You in school?

(CONTINUED)

MARLA
I, uh... I actually dropped out.

LAINA
Oh yeah? Same here.

MARLA
It was just too much.

LAINA
Yeah, none of the professors at the community college are worth anything anyway.

MARLA
Oh, I didn't --

LAINA
But I was also studying art which can't really be taught. You either get it or you don't.

They move down to the last window, on the far end of the house from the front porch.

MARLA
So... you were an art major?

LAINA
Well I didn't get very far, but yeah, I guess you could say that.

MARLA
What kind of art do you do?

LAINA
I just experiment mostly. I'll try anything. If it works, it --

From inside the open door the telephone starts ringing.

MARLA
Oh, sorry, let me get that.

Marla goes around the corner of the trailer and up the porch steps to catch the phone on the last ring.

Laina gets off the ladder and peeks around the corner to watch Marla talk on the phone. She sees Jackson coming down the hill from his parent's house and ducks away.

Marla hangs up the phone and turns around, calling out toward Laina.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

You aren't going to believe it. I
got --

She bumps into Jackson standing behind her, smoking on the porch.

MARLA (CONT'D)

-- the job.

JACKSON

Congrats. What's she doing here?

Jackson's voice is lowered to a whisper as he points to Laina who is washing a window at the far end of the trailer.

MARLA

Oh, that's Laina, she--

JACKSON

Yeah, I know who she is.

MARLA

She was just helping me do some
cleaning. I've been at it all --

JACKSON

So when do you start?

MARLA

They want me to come in on
Monday... are you upset?

JACKSON

Not upset. You hanging out with the
neighbors now?

MARLA

She was just helping --

JACKSON

Well tell her to help someone else.

He reaches inside the door to the trailer and grabs his keys off the hook on the wall.

MARLA

What's the problem?

JACKSON

There's no problem, just as long as
she keeps to herself. I'm not
putting up with her bullshit again.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA
Jackson, what are you talking
about?

JACKSON
Nothing. I'm going to meet the
guys. Just make sure she's gone
when I get back.

He puts out his cigarette on the wooden porch railing then
looks around the inside of the trailer.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Looks nice.

He flicks the cigarette butt down, gets into his truck and
drives away. Marla looks back over to Laina as the dust
settles in the driveway.

LAINA
He okay?

MARLA
He's fine. How's the window?

LAINA
Spotless!

Laina smiles wide and throws the rag over her shoulder.

INT. SUPER SHOE STORE - DAY

Marla walks into the shoe store and goes up to a man named
BILL behind the counter. He is large and greasy.

BILL
Marla?

MARLA
That's me.

BILL
I'm glad you actually showed.
Name's Bill. I'm your new boss.

Bill puts out his large hand and he and Marla exchange an
awkward handshake. He takes her to the back room and gives
her a shirt and name-tag.

SALES COUNTER

(CONTINUED)

Marla sits behind the counter in her new uniform. She practices getting the drawer to the cash register open two or three times, wipes off the counter and restlessly waits for customers to come in. Finally, she takes out her parenting book and starts reading.

Later, a group of CHEERLEADERS come into the store. Marla recognizes their outfits from her high school and puts the book up higher to cover her face. Bill approaches her from behind.

BILL
Aren't you going to help them?

MARLA
Oh!

Marla puts the book down on the counter.

MARLA (CONT'D)
Sorry sir. Should I go over and --

BILL
Wait. What're you reading?

Bill points to the parenting book.

MARLA
Oh, it's about --

BILL
Don't tell me you're knocked up. I wouldn't have hired you.

MARLA
What?

Marla glances over at the girls to make sure they aren't listening.

BILL
I don't need some hormonal pregnant teenager going batshit on the customers. Then there's all that maternity leave shit --

MARLA
(blurts)
I'm not pregnant.

BILL
(suspiciously)
Then why are you reading that?

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

It was, um... I found it in my
mom's books.

(more convincingly)

It's pretty hilarious actually; she
didn't do any of this stuff.

BILL

Well... alright. You shouldn't be
reading on the job anyway. Go help
those customers.

MARLA

Yes sir.

Bill goes to his office in the back and Marla walks over to the group of girls but ducks out of sight into an aisle before they see her. She leans against the shoe rack, puts her hand on her stomach and closes her eyes.

INT. ENTRYWAY - DAY

Marla comes into the trailer, puts down her purse, takes off her name tag and throws it into a dish by the answering machine. She notices an unread voicemail and peers around the corner to see Jackson already dozing in his recliner, empty beer cans scattered around him.

MARLA

Did someone call?

After a few moments with no response Marla hits the play button on the answering machine. The message is from a SECRETARY.

SECRETARY

Hi Miss Mabe, this is Linda from
Mount Hope Hospital calling to
remind you that your first prenatal
appointment is this Friday at 1:30.
If you are unable to make your
appointment or need to resched --

Marla pauses the message and calls into the other room.

MARLA

Jackson? Did you hear that?

Silence.

Jackson!

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON (O.S.)
Goddammit! What?

Marla rewinds the message and plays it back for him, stopping it after the secretary says the appointment time. Marla peeks her head around the corner.

LIVING ROOM

MARLA
Did you hear? Our first appointment.

JACKSON
(slurring his speech)
For what?

After Marla doesn't respond, Jackson opens his eyes, sits up from the recliner and cranes his neck to look over at her.

MARLA
The baby, Jackson. The baby.

JACKSON
1:30? This Friday?

MARLA
So you were listening.

JACKSON
I can't go. I'm working.

MARLA
Take a long lunch, it's not like your dad won't understand.

JACKSON
I need all the hours I can get if I'm gonna keep up with all those shoes you're selling.

Marla lets out an exasperated sigh and goes back into the entryway for a moment to collect herself before turning back around into the living room, angrier than before.

MARLA
Are we still fighting about this? It's been two weeks, give it a goddamn break!

JACKSON
What did you just say to me?

(CONTINUED)

Jackson gets up from his recliner, angry. Marla backs up a step and lowers her voice back down.

MARLA

I'm just -- what I meant to say --

Jackson moves closer towards Marla and she takes another few steps backwards until her back is against the wall.

JACKSON

This is my house. You don't ever talk to a man like that in his own house, understand?

MARLA

Jackson, I think you've had a little too much to drink --

Jackson gets even closer, now inches from Marla's face.

JACKSON

Understand?!

MARLA

I understand! I'm sorry.

After a tense silence between them Jackson backs away and goes back to his recliner.

JACKSON

Good. Now that's the last I want to hear about your appointment bullshit.

Jackson plops down into the recliner and pulls the lever to recline. Marla leans back over into the entryway and hits the delete button on the answering machine.

EXT. TRAILER - DAY

Marla gets in Jackson's truck and lights a cigarette before pulling out of the driveway. She stops at Laina's trailer where she's watering the flowers on her front lawn and honks the horn. Laina turns around and walks over to the truck window.

MARLA

Hope I didn't scare you.

LAINA

Never. Where are your work threads?

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

I'm leaving the tacky polo at home today. I'm on my way to a doctor's appointment.

LAINA

Don't tell me you're sick.

MARLA

What? No I'm -- well, I guess I forgot to mention it.

LAINA

You're what? Terminally pretty?

MARLA

... Pregnant actually.

Laina is visibly shocked but tries to hide it.

LAINA

How do you forget to tell someone you're knocked... I mean, with child?

Marla starts laughing.

MARLA

With child?

After her laughter subsides, Marla shrugs her shoulders and takes a drag of her cigarette.

MARLA (CONT'D)

I just assumed you'd figure it out once my stomach started to resemble a bowling ba --

Laina cuts her off by taking the cigarette from Marla's hand dangling out of the window, throwing it on the ground and stomping it out.

MARLA (CONT'D)

Hey! What the hell?

LAINA

I should say the same to you! Do you know what those could do to that baby?

MARLA

Oh, come on, you don't really believe all that stuff.

(CONTINUED)

LAINA
I certainly do. Along with the
other 9 out of 10 doctors.

MARLA
Oh, please.

Marla takes out her cigarettes and starts to get another one
from the pack. Laina snatches it out of her hand.

MARLA
Laina!

LAINA
Marla! I'm serious. I'm not letting
you cloud your womb in cancer.

MARLA
But you smoke like a freight train!

LAINA
Well, I'm also not carrying another
human life as my cargo.

MARLA
How are you gonna lecture me about
smoking when I don't even go
through a quarter of what you do in
a day? That pack will last me the
rest of the week.

Marla swipes at the pack of cigarettes in Laina's hand but
she dodges her. They glare at each other before Laina
finally speaks up.

LAINA
Fine. Then we'll quit.

MARLA
Quit? ...Wait, we?

LAINA
You heard me.

MARLA
There is no way you can quit.

LAINA
You have my word.

Marla gives Laina a long, doubtful look.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

You really care about this, don't you?

LAINA

I've been meaning to anyway. Here's my incentive.

MARLA

Fine. If I agree will you let me go to my appointment?

Laina leans over and tucks the pack of cigarettes in front of her front tire. She stands back up with a smug look on her face.

LAINA

As you were Miss Mabe.

MARLA

Oh, you think you're so cute. Enjoy these exhaust fumes, it's the last smoke you're going to get for a long while.

Marla finishes pulling out of the driveway, kicking up dirt and smoke around Laina.

LAINA

Refreshing!

Marla hangs her middle finger out of the window and continues driving off, leaving Laina in the dust, smiling.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Marla pulls into the driveway and finds Jackson outside on the porch waiting for her.

JACKSON

Where the hell have you been?

Marla takes a grocery bag out of the passenger seat and shuts the truck door behind her.

MARLA

I picked Mel up from school after the appointment. Then I went to --

JACKSON

Mom's been ringing the phone off the hook. We have our weekly dinner tonight.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

I know. That's why I'm late. I had to go to the store to pick something up.

Jackson comes down the steps as Marla takes a pie out of the grocery bag.

JACKSON

Store bought?

MARLA

Would you rather me make it from scratch again?

Jackson takes the empty grocery bag from Marla, crumples it up and tosses it in a nearby trashcan.

JACKSON

Whatever. We're already late, let's just go.

Jackson starts up the hill. Marla takes the plastic wrap off the pie, throws it away and runs up the hill to catch up with Jackson.

EXT. PUCKETT HOUSE - NIGHT

Jackson walks up the porch and rings the doorbell, Marla following behind.

EARL (O.S.)

Son! We're back here!

As soon as Marla gets onto the porch, Jackson turns around and walks toward the backyard.

EXT. PUCKETT BACKYARD - NIGHT

Jackson opens a gate to the backyard that comes out onto a patio by a pool. Earl has on an apron and is grilling while Shelly sits at a patio table drinking iced tea.

EARL

There they are!

Earl brushes off his hands, walks over and gives Marla a long hug. After he's finished he gives Jackson a playful punch on the shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

EARL (CONT'D)
How're we doin'?

JACKSON
Yeah, uh, fine Dad.

Jackson and Marla walk over toward the patio table Shelly is at and Earl resumes his spot at the grill.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
(to Earl)
What made you decide to break out the grill?

SHELLY
Hi Jackie.

JACKSON
Hey Ma.

Jackson leans down and gives his mother a kiss on top of the head before sitting down next to her.

EARL
Just thought we could use a change of pace.

SHELLY
(to Jackson)
And I just bought him a new set of grilling tools for his birthday.

JACKSON
So that's why he's in a good mood.

Jackson and Shelly laugh as Marla sits down and puts the pie on the table.

SHELLY
That certainly looks nice.

MARLA
Well, thank you Shelly.

SHELLY
Let's hope it's worth the \$4.99.

Shelly points to a price tag on the side of the pie plate and Jackson breaks into laughter.

JACKSON
I told ya you wouldn't sneak store bought past mom.

(CONTINUED)

Jackson continues to laugh and Shelly joins in.

EARL
What're you two cracking up about
over there?

Shelly composes herself long enough to call back over.

SHELLY
Nothing, Earl!

MARLA
I have to go to the bathroom.

JACKSON
Oh c'mon Mar, we're only joking.

Marla starts to walk away from the table when Shelly catches her by the sleeve.

SHELLY
Dear, on your way could you fill my
glass for me? The tea pitcher is in
the kitchen.

Marla takes the glass from Shelly and starts to go in the house through the back door.

MARLA
Sure, Shelly.

SHELLY
Oh, and Marla?
(turning back to Jackson)
No lemon.

INT. PUCKETT BATHROOM - NIGHT

Marla sets Shelly's glass down on the bathroom counter and washes her face in the sink. She looks back up at her wet face in the mirror and lets out a long sigh.

EXT. PUCKETT BACKYARD - NIGHT

Jackson and Shelly chat at the patio table until they are interrupted by Earl.

EARL
Damn, I forgot to call Al to check
on the rig. Sucker's axel broke.

(CONTINUED)

Earl takes off his apron and tosses it to Jackson as he heads into the house.

EARL (CONT'D)
Son, you're on grill duty.

INT. PUCKETT HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Marla comes out of the bathroom into the hallway and runs into Earl, spilling some of Shelly's sweet tea on his shirt.

MARLA
Oh! Shit, Sorry.

Marla uses her sleeve to wipe away at Earl's chest.

EARL
No sweat, sweetie.

Earl takes her hand and leans in to put his other hand against the wall behind Marla in the cramped hallway.

MARLA
Earl, I, uh...

EARL
You know, it was my birthday.

Marla makes an effort to avoid the eye contact Earl is making with her as he holds her hand against his chest.

MARLA
Yeah, uh, happy birthday.

EARL
I was disappointed to see you forgot about my present.

MARLA
Jackson didn't remind me. I would've gotten you something.

EARL
I'm sure we can figure out a way you can make up for it.

Earl leans in close to Marla, trying to kiss her but she snatches her hand away from his and pushes him back against the wall.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

No, Earl. Just... no. That's over.

EARL

But it don't gotta be.

MARLA

But it does. Jesus, your wife is in the backyard.

EARL

I know exactly where my wife is.

Earl grabs her hand again and tries to pull her in for a kiss. Marla pulls away, dropping the glass and shattering it on the floor. They speak in hushed tones.

MARLA

Earl! Didn't you hear me? This can't happen anymore.

EARL

And why not? I guess you think you don't need me.

MARLA

That has nothing to do with --

EARL

Well, what's changed? Huh, Mar?

MARLA

(louder)

I'm pregnant! With your goddamn grandkid! Don't you get that?

An ashamed look washes over Earl's face and a silence hangs between them. Marla breaks it by bending down to start picking up glass.

MARLA (CONT'D)

Can't you see how messed up all of this was? It's over. I'm with Jackson, you're with Shelly and this thing between us --

Marla cuts her finger and inhales sharply. She tosses the glass down on the ground and gets back up.

MARLA (CONT'D)

Just clean this up.

INT. PUCKETT KITCHEN - NIGHT

Marla goes into the kitchen and washes her wound in the sink. She grabs a new glass and fills it with tea.

Marla's eyes start to water but she wipes her tears and, after a moment, grabs a lemon slice from the iced tea tray and aggressively squeezes the pulp into Shelly's glass. She throws the rind in a trashcan, takes the glass and goes out the back door.

INT. JACKSON'S TRUCK - DAY

FRONT OF SCHOOL

Mel and Marla are sitting in the truck. Mel fixes her hair in the driver's seat mirror, a sucker stick hanging out of her mouth. She puts the car into gear and starts to pull away from the curb.

MARLA

Aren't you forgetting something?

Mel pops the sucker out of her mouth and considers. After a moment, she buckles her seatbelt then continues to pull off the curb onto the road.

MEL

Ok, am I good?

MARLA

Yeah, Mel. You're golden.

MEL

Am I in the lines? Because I feel like I'm not in the lines.

MARLA

You're perfect, chill out.

Mel turns a corner onto the the main street.

MEL

Wow, there are actual cars down here. This isn't like all those back roads we drove on.

MARLA

Considering that the speed limit is twenty miles an hour, I'd say you're ok.

(CONTINUED)

MEL

Twenty? Dad used to fly through here.

Marla shifts in her seat a little bit.

MARLA

Well, most of the townies do.

MEL

Remember that time he got pulled over? He gave that deputy such a hard time. I thought he was gonna get shot.

Marla shifts in her seat again and doesn't say anything. After a few moments Mel's eyes widen and she suddenly hits the breaks. The car behind her screeches to a halt and beeps their horn.

MEL

Shit! I'm so sorry!

MARLA

Mel! What are you doing?!

MEL

Marla, I'm sorry, I wasn't thinking.

The car behind them grows agitated and lays down on their horn a bit longer. Marla continues to panic.

MARLA

It's fine, Mel! Just keep driving!

MEL

Right, shit! Sorry.

Mel jerks the truck forward and continues driving. The car behind her keeps at a considerable distance. Marla takes the sucker out of Mel's mouth and tosses it out the window.

MARLA

You can't just stop in the middle of the road like that!

MEL

Right. Sorry, I'm just nervous.

A silence hangs in the truck as Mel focuses on driving. She turns a corner and gets stuck behind a school bus in traffic. Marla turns from looking out the window and her eyes widen at the sight of the bus.

(CONTINUED)

FLASHBACK - CHILDHOOD MEMORY

A young Marla and Mel sit at a bus stop at the end of a long, dirt road. Marla is digging through her backpack frantically, looking for a book.

Marla says something to Mel then begins to run down the road toward the house, leaving her backpack on the bench. She turns around halfway down the road and sees the school bus pulling up to the stop.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

Mel touches Marla's shoulder, snapping her back to attention.

MEL (CONT'D)

-- I didn't mean to say that

MARLA

(distant)

Mel, it's fine. I know.

MEL

I feel so bad.

MARLA

Aaaand you just ran a red light.

MEL

Oh, god!

MARLA

You know what, just pull over.
Let's work on parallel parking.

Mel pulls into a parking place, still halfway in the street. The car behind her swerves around the bumper.

MARLA

Just kind of pull forward, then try
to back into it.

MEL

Alright. Are you mad?

Mel pushes up the gear shift and jolts the truck forward.

MARLA

Mel, please just focus.

(CONTINUED)

MEL
You sound mad right now.

MARLA
I'm not mad, Mel. I'm just
frustrated.

MEL
Frustrated?

Mel starts to haphazardly back into the space.

MEL (CONT'D)
My tongue just slipped.

MARLA
It's not about that! I'm frustrated
because I'm driving with goddamn
Mr. Magoo!

MEL
Why are you yelling at me?!

MARLA
Sorry! Jesus! ...Okay, just pull
forward and try again. You almost
have it.

Mel successfully gets into the parallel parking space and
turns off the engine. Marla puts her head back against the
seat and lets out a long sigh.

MEL
So I guess I'm done for the day?

MARLA
Yeah, I'd say so.

Marla opens her eyes and sees Laina walking up the street
with someone but their backs are towards her.

MARLA
Is that --

Marla leans out the window.

MARLA (CONT'D)
Laina!

Laina turns around but doesn't see her. The WOMAN she's
walking with stops and turns around too. Marla notices the
two women are holding hands and ducks back inside the car.

(CONTINUED)

MEL
Who is that?

MARLA
Don't worry about it.

Marla looks back towards Laina and her girlfriend and sees they've already moved on up the street.

MARLA (CONT'D)
Alright, move over. I'm getting
back in the driver's seat.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jackson sits in his recliner drinking a beer, watching wheel of fortune and yelling at the screen. Marla sits on the couch beside the recliner watching the TV in silence.

JACKSON
Oh, c'mon! Solve the damn puzzle!

MARLA
You already know the answer?

JACKSON
Of course! It's obvious! "Todo,
we're not in Kansas anymore."

Marla looks at the screen where only a few letters are revealed.

MARLA
....WOW.

JACKSON
Fuck it, these idiots are stressing
me out.

Jackson gets up from his recliner and gets his cigarettes out of his pajama pants pocket.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
I need a smoke, you coming?

MARLA
I think I'll stay. Looks like Gary
is about to solve.

JACKSON
Mar, this is the third smoke break
you've passed up. What's the deal?
You aren't trying to quit are ya?

(CONTINUED)

MARLA
No... well, sorta.

JACKSON
Why? Is it about the baby? I told
you all that stuff is bullshit.
Jerry's dad's a doctor; he said it
himself.

MARLA
Isn't Jerry's dad a vet?

JACKSON
Same difference.

Marla shifts in her seat and turns to look up at Jackson.

MARLA
I'm just not sure. Laina said --

JACKSON
Oh, Jesus. Not that bitch.

MARLA
She's not a bitch. She's a friend.

JACKSON
Oh give me a break, you don't even
know her.

MARLA
Why do you hate her so much?

JACKSON
Why? I'll tell you why. But I'm
going out to smoke.

Marla puts on her jacket and follows Jackson to the porch.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Jackson and Marla come out onto the porch and both see Laina on the other side of the trailer park, reading on her own front porch. Laina waves and, after Jackson and Marla return the gesture, goes back to reading.

JACKSON
Figures she'd be out here.

MARLA
She can't hear us from over there.
So? What happened?

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON

Alright, alright, hold on.

Jackson lights up his cigarette and starts speaking in hushed tones.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

Well, that bitch hung all over me the first few weeks I moved in here. Pulling that whole friendly neighbor act bullshit.

MARLA

What's wrong with being nice?

JACKSON

Let me finish, dammit. So she was all hung up on me, but I'd just started datin' you, so I had to let her down easy. That's when the bitch went ballistic.

MARLA

I don't believe that.

JACKSON

Well, believe it. My parents almost had to evict her. More than once.

MARLA

She's a good person.

JACKSON

Fuckin' dyke is what she is.

MARLA

Hey!

Marla points her finger at Jackson and glances over a Laina who's looking up from her book. Marla puts away her finger and lowers her voice back down.

MARLA

That is not okay.

JACKSON

What? It's true. Bitch couldn't have me so she decided to try her hand at women. That's all I can figure.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA
Stop calling her a bitch. You know
what, just stop talking about her.
I'm sorry I asked.

Marla goes back into the house leaving Jackson by himself.

JACKSON
Whatever.

Jackson shrugs and keeps smoking, tossing over a sarcastic
wave to Laina.

INT. SUPER SHOE STORE - DAY

Marla sits at the counter, reading the last few pages of her
parenting book. She's highlighting a section when a customer
rings the bell and startles her.

MARLA
Oh, I'm so sorry, I --

LAINA
Can I speak to your manager?

Marla laughs. Laina leans over the counter to give her a
hug.

MARLA
I don't think you two would get
along. He's back in his office
doing some very official business
anyway.

LAINA
Is that code for satisfying his
foot fetish with the ladies' shoe
catalogue?

MARLA
Oh god, gross. I'm glad shoe
catalogues aren't a thing.

LAINA
You just think they aren't because
he has them all.

MARLA
Anyway! How may I help you?

(CONTINUED)

LAINA
You can start by ringing up this
pair of little black pumps.

Laina sits a box of high heels down on the counter and Marla begins to ring them up.

MARLA
All the shoe stores between here
and the trailer park and you wind
up at Super Shoe.

LAINA
Well I was hoping I might get a
friendly discount.

MARLA
(sarcastically)
Too bad I only do those for
friends.

As she says this Marla scans a card attached to the lanyard around her neck, discounting Laina's purchase.

LAINA
Thanks.

MARLA
Mhm.

LAINA
So I was planning to head over to
the food court after this. Do you
happen to have a lunch break coming
up?

MARLA
Oh. Yeah, that would be great.

Marla glances down and checks her watch.

MARLA (CONT'D)
It is a little early, but I can go
clear it with Bill.

Marla walks out from behind the counter and starts toward the back office. Laina calls after her.

LAINA
Make sure you knock!

INT. FOOD COURT DINER - DAY

Laina and Marla sit in a booth at the 50's themed diner in the food court and eat their lunch.

MARLA
So, what's the occasion?

LAINA
Huh?

MARLA
There must be a reason you bought those heels.

LAINA
Oh! They're for the opening of my art show.

Laina's eyes light up, she reaches over, touches Marla's hand and starts talking through a mouthful of burger.

LAINA (CONT'D)
Oh my god! You should come!

MARLA
Yeah? Well, when is it?

LAINA
Next Saturday at 6 o'clock. At the gallery downtown.

MARLA
(teasingly)
Well I will be off work by then.

LAINA
You have to be there! Promise me!

Marla smiles wide in response to Laina's excitement.

MARLA
Alright. I promise.

They hold eye contact for a moment that is broken by the DINER WAITER. Laina snaps her hand away from Marla's.

DINER WAITER
Can I get you ladies anything else?

MARLA
Could I get another burger?

(CONTINUED)

LAINA
Someone's hungry.

MARLA
Hey, lay off. I'm eating for two. I'm just glad to be out of the morning sickness stage and into the unquenchable cravings stage.

LAINA
(playfully)
Oh that's right, the big bombshell you dropped on me last week. What other secrets are you keeping?

MARLA
I'm sure you have secrets too.

The comment catches Laina off-guard and she grows silent. Marla stammers to fill the awkward silence.

MARLA (CONT'D)
Besides, I didn't mean to keep it a secret. Other than the baby in my womb I'm an open book.

As Marla finishes off the last bite of her burger an abashed look washes over her face.

MARLA
Wait, actually....

LAINA
Oh god, you're the leader of an underground drug ring.

MARLA
If only. Maybe then I wouldn't be selling Sketchers for a living.

The diner employee comes over and sits a new burger down in front of Marla. She takes a bite.

LAINA
Okay, so what is it?

MARLA
How, uh... how old do you think I am?

LAINA
Oh. Well, you said you dropped out of the community college, right? So I'd say about --

(CONTINUED)

MARLA
I meant high school... I'm the
senior drop out everyone makes fun
of.

LAINA
Oh... so, how old are you?

MARLA
Just broke 18.

Laina considers this. She starts to say something but Marla blurts out at the same time.

MARLA (CONT'D)
You don't think I'm stupid, do you?

LAINA
Oh, please. High school is what's
stupid.

MARLA
Yeah?

LAINA
Yeah... Tell you what, if you go
back and get your GED from Smithson
Community, I'll start my art
classes back with you.

MARLA
That a promise?

Laina puts her elbow out on the table, her pinky
outstretched.

LAINA
We already made the pact to quit
smoking, one more can't hurt.

Marla smiles wide and takes Laina's pinky in hers.

EXT. PUCKETT HOUSE - NIGHT

Marla and Jackson walk up the porch steps to his parents
house. Just as Jackson is about to ring the doorbell they
hear a crash from inside. Shelly and Earl are heard shouting
at each other indistinctly. Jackson and Marla exchange a
look.

Once the yelling subsides, Jackson rings the doorbell. After
a few moments Shelly answers, red in the face.

(CONTINUED)

SHELLY

There you two are. Aren't you early?

Jackson takes Marla's wrist and checks her watch.

JACKSON

It's 6:30.

SHELLY

Oh, my mistake then. Come on in.

Shelly takes the store-bought pie that Marla is holding.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Thank you, dear. It looks lovely.

Marla's mouth falls slightly agape. She blinks in confusion before following Shelly and Jackson inside.

INT. DINING ROOM -CONTINUOUS

Shelly comes into the dining room and puts the pie down on the table. Jackson and Marla follow. A timer is heard going off in the next room over.

SHELLY

Oops! Sounds like dinner is ready.

Shelly rushes over to the door to the kitchen but takes a look back at Jackson and Marla, confused looks still on their faces, before she enters.

SHELLY

Go ahead, have a seat.

They sit down and the sound of the timer stops.

JACKSON

Something isn't right here.

MARLA

I'd say so.

JACKSON

No, I mean the table. Doesn't something look different?

Marla looks around and shrugs. Her foot brushes something under the table and she looks underneath the tablecloth.

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON
Where's the gravy boat?

MARLA
I think I found it.

Marla lifts the tablecloth so Jackson can see the shattered antique gravy boat that was swept underneath the table.

JACKSON
What in the hell --

SHELLY
It looks like I burned the roast.

Marla drops the table cloth just as Shelly comes rushing back into the dining room with a large salad bowl in her hands.

SHELLY (CONT'D)
But luckily we still have the soup
and salad.

She sits the bowl down on the table and starts fixing Jackson and Marla's plates.

MARLA
Thank you, Shelly.

JACKSON
Ma, is everything alright?

SHELLY
Don't be silly, of course it is.

JACKSON
Well, where is dad?

SHELLY
Oh, he's feeling a bit under the
weather. I'll be taking him to the
doctor's in the morning.

Shelly shifts her attention to Marla just as she's putting a large bite of salad in her mouth.

SHELLY (CONT'D)
Actually, that reminds me. Marla?

MARLA
Hmph?

Marla finishes swallowing her bite and turns toward Shelly.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA (CONT'D)
Yes, Shelly?

SHELLY
I was wondering if you might like
to switch your prenatal
appointments to our family doctor?

JACKSON
Why would she want to do that?

SHELLY
Well, you just don't get the same
treatment from public services.

MARLA
Thank you Shelly but I think I'm --

SHELLY
I insist! I want to make sure
you're properly taken care of.
That's my grand-baby after all.

JACKSON
Really Ma, she's alright.

SHELLY
(stern)
Jackie. I insist.

Jackson puts his hands up in surrender and finishes his
bite.

JACKSON
Shit, whatever.

SHELLY
I've already made the appointment.
This Tuesday at two. I'll be happy
to drive you.

MARLA
Um, alright. Thank you.

SHELLY
No problem at all, dear.

The timer starts going off again in the kitchen.

SHELLY (CONT'D)
Soup's up!

EXT. LAINA'S PORCH - DAY

A school bus pulls up to the trailer park and Mel gets off. Laina is leaning over the railing of her porch reading a worn paperback when she sees her walking over to Marla's trailer.

LAINA

Hey, you!

Mel looks around briefly and points to herself.

LAINA (CONT'D)

Yeah, you! Come over here.

Mel walks over and looks up at Laina on her porch.

LAINA (CONT'D)

Yep, I thought so.

MEL

Lady, have we met?

Laina starts to walk down the steps to her porch.

LAINA

No, not officially at least.

Laina holds out her hand to Mel, which she takes with a bit of hesitation.

LAINA (CONT'D)

Name's Laina. I'm friends with your sister.

MEL

Oh! Well, I'm Mel.

LAINA

Mel! That's right! Your name was on the tip of my tongue.

Laina takes Mel's locket in her hand.

LAINA (CONT'D)

I recognized you from the picture in your sister's. It's nice to actually meet you in person.

MEL

God, I look like such a dweeb in that photo. I'm surprised you recognized me at all.

(CONTINUED)

LAINA

Funny, Marla said the same thing about her picture. You two are really alike.

MEL

It's been said before.

Mel takes a moment and looks at all the flowers on the porch, then points to a patch of DAISIES.

MEL

These are my favorites. Marla's too.

LAINA

See? Just alike.

MARLA

What are you doing with my sister?

Laina and Mel turn around to see Marla walking over from her trailer, car keys in hand.

LAINA

Just getting acquainted, is all.

Marla walks over to the patch of daisies and plucks one off. She braids it in her hair as she talks to Mel.

MARLA

Well, we better get going before Jackson gets home.

MEL

(to Laina)

Sister dearest over here is teaching me to drive.

Marla finishes braiding the daisy in her hair and tosses the keys to Mel.

MEL (CONT'D)

It was nice meeting you.

LAINA

Likewise. Good luck out there.

MEL

God, I'll need it.

Mel and Marla are getting in the truck when Laina calls over.

(CONTINUED)

LAINA
Marla!

MARLA
Yeah?

LAINA
Don't forget about the opening
tomorrow!

MARLA
Wouldn't miss it for the world!

Mel notices the interaction between Laina and her sister and her eyes dart between them before she ducks into the truck.

INT. ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Marla comes in and puts the truck keys on the ring. She turns around and sees Jackson through the screen door to the back porch, his back turned to her and a beer can in his hand dangling by his side. The screen door behind Marla slams shut.

FLASHBACK - CHILDHOOD MEMORY

Marla slams the door to the house behind her, the school bus is seen through the window. The driver honks the horn.

Marla runs into the kitchen and searches for her schoolbook on the messy table. She finds it but before she can rush back out of the kitchen, she sees her father through the screen door; His back turned to her and a beer can in his hand dangling by his side.

She goes to the screen door and, as she reaches for the handle, the bus lays down on the horn.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

JACKSON (O.S.)
Where the hell have you been?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Marla walks into the living room, where Jackson is coming in from the back porch. He plops down in his recliner, drunk.

MARLA
Sorry hon, I was out with Mel.
There was an accident out on 64 and
we --

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON
I don't care, Mar. You need to
start asking me to use the truck. I
was gonna meet the guys tonight.

MARLA
Sure, sorry.

Marla starts to walk away to the bedroom but turns back
around at the doorway.

MARLA (CONT'D)
What about Saturday? Around 6?

JACKSON
What do you need it for Saturday?

MARLA
Well, there's this opening at the
art gallery I was wanting to go to.
(hesitantly)
You could come if you want. Might
be nice.

JACKSON
I don't wanna go to a damn art
show.

MARLA
But can I use the truck?

JACKSON
Sure Mar, whatever.

Marla starts to turn around and go into the bedroom.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Since when do you care so much
about art anyway?

Marla sighs and turns back around.

MARLA
Well... I know the artist.

JACKSON
Who?

MARLA
You won't like it.

Jackson scratches himself before realizing.

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON
Oh, don't tell me....

MARLA
Jackson, I think if you'd just give
her another chance you would really
like her.

Jackson suddenly swipes everything off the coffee table, enraged. Marla's baby book lands at her feet. She takes a few fearful steps back as Jackson stands up from the recliner.

JACKSON
I warned you to stay away from that
dyke!

MARLA
Jesus, Jackson. Calm down.

Jackson walks over towards Marla, getting closer to her with each word he says.

JACKSON
No! You are not going to that
opening! You hear me?

MARLA
Please, it's really no big --

JACKSON
Marla, goddammit, you're not going!

Jackson kicks the baby book out of his path, then pulls the bedroom door behind Marla shut, pinning her up against it.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Tell me you won't go.

MARLA
Jackson I --

JACKSON
TELL ME!

MARLA
Okay, okay! I won't go!

Jackson puts his hand against her throat, his face inches away from hers.

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON
I don't believe you.

Marla struggles to croak out her words.

MARLA
I promise! I won't go! Jackson,
please!

Jackson takes his hand away and Marla slides down to the ground, gasping for air. She watches Jackson stalk back outside to the front porch and slam the door behind him.

INT. SUPER SHOE STORE - DAY

Dressed with a turtleneck under her work shirt, Marla checks out a CUSTOMER at the counter. Her manager Bill is standing in a nearby aisle with a clipboard taking inventory.

MARLA
(to customer)
Thanks, have a great day.

As the customer leaves, Marla rubs at her sore neck and looks around the store. She spots a man she didn't see come in. Marla realizes who it is and ducks down behind the counter but he turns around and walks over.

EARL
Excuse me, miss? Could you get one
of those thingamajigs to size my
foot?

Marla makes eye contact with Bill from where she's squatting behind the counter. She grabs a BRANNOCK DEVICE and stands up.

MARLA
Sure thing.

EARL
The boots I'm eyeing are over here.

They walk over to an aisle on the opposite end of the store.

BOOT AISLE

When Marla gets to the aisle, Earl is already taking off his shoe. She bends down and puts his foot in the Brannock device.

(CONTINUED)

EARL
Haven't seen you in a while.

Marla ignores the comment and continues sizing his foot.

EARL (CONT'D)
So that's how you're gonna be.

MARLA
Looks like you're a 10 1/2, sir.

EARL
I know what my damn shoe size is.
I'm here to see you.

MARLA
Which of these did you want?

Marla gestures to the shelf behind her. Earl lets out a deep sigh and rubs his forehead.

EARL
Just gimme a pair of them brown
ones up top.

Earl points to the boots as Marla rolls a ladder over. She tucks the Brannock device under her arm and starts to climb up. Earl stands behind her on the ladder.

EARL
C'mon, Mar. Talk to me.

Marla scans her finger along the boxes, looking for his size.

EARL (CONT'D)
I guess you're just playing hard to
get. Is that it?

Earl grabs Marla's waist at his eye level and turns her around.

MARLA
Earl!

Earl tries to pull her down onto him from the ladder.

EARL
Honey, don't be like this.

Marla takes the Brannock device from under her arm and hits Earl in the head with it. He stumbles backward into the shelf behind him, knocking a pair of shoes down.

(CONTINUED)

As Marla stabilizes herself on the ladder her manager Bill comes rushing into the aisle.

BILL
What's going on here?

Earl regains his composure and and holds up the box of boots that fell in his one hand and rubs his head with the other.

EARL
Sorry for the commotion. The lady here was getting these down for me and they must've slipped from her hand.

BILL
Oh. I'm sorry, sir. She'll be more careful.

EARL
Don't worry about it. I'll be fine.

Bill gives Marla a stern look before leaving the aisle. Once he's gone she gets down off the ladder, shoves the actual boots Earl wanted into his hands and leaves the aisle.

SALES COUNTER

Marla is rubbing her face in her hands when Earl approaches the counter with the boots. She rings them up as Earl talks to her in hushed tones.

EARL
I can't believe the shit you just pulled back there.

MARLA
\$54.53.

EARL
What?

MARLA
That's your total, sir.

Earl takes out his wallet and hands over three twenties.

EARL
We need to talk and you know it.

MARLA
There's nothing to talk about, Earl!

(CONTINUED)

Bill looks up from his clipboard and Marla lowers her voice back down. He goes back to doing inventory.

MARLA (CONT'D)

I think I made myself pretty clear.

EARL

Fine. You don't want to talk? Maybe I'll go talk to your manager over there.

MARLA

Earl, don't.

EARL

Yeah, maybe I'll just go have a little chat with him.

Earl starts to turn but Marla grabs his arm.

MARLA

Please, don't. I need this job.

EARL

Maybe Shelly was right. Pregnant girl like yourself doesn't need to be working anyhow.

MARLA

Please, keep your voice down!

Earl looks at her puzzled, then looks back over at Bill.

EARL

He doesn't know, does he?

There's a silence as Marla tries not to make eye contact.

EARL (CONT'D)

Well, I'll be keeping that in mind.

Earl takes his change from Marla and leans in close.

EARL (CONT'D)

Have a great day.

He exits the store as Marla puts her face in her hands.

EXT. TRAILER - DAY

Marla comes out of the trailer and starts to walk up the Hill to the Puckett house.

LAINA (O.S.)
Hey stranger!

Marla tenses and turns around to see Laina approaching her from her porch. She glances over at the trailer window where she can see Jackson in his recliner.

LAINA (CONT'D)
Where were you on Saturday?

MARLA
Oh, um, sorry. Something came up.

Marla tries to avoid eye contact with Laina and fidgets with her hands.

LAINA
Oh... well, that's fine! We can just go on our own. Might be better that way. Saturday was all over the place.

MARLA
Sure, yeah.

Marla shuffles her feet.

LAINA
When are you free?

MARLA
Um, I'm not sure...

LAINA
Well, how about tomorrow?

Marla glances over at the trailer window where Jackson is getting up.

MARLA
Yeah, tomorrow sounds great.

LAINA
Want to leave around noon?

MARLA
Perfect, yeah.

(CONTINUED)

LAINA
Hey, are you ok? You seem --

MARLA
Actually, I'm in kind of a hurry.

LAINA
Oh? Sorry to keep you.

Marla glances back over to the window where Jackson has resumed his spot in his recliner.

MARLA
No, you're fine, I'm just meeting my mother-in-law.

LAINA
Oh ok. Well good luck. Shelly seems....

MARLA
Bitchy?

LAINA
You said it, not me. So, I'll see you tomorrow?

MARLA
It's a date.

Marla turns around and grimaces at her phrasing, then continues walking up the hill. Laina smiles and walks back to her porch.

INT. SHELLY'S CAR - DAY

Shelly drives her car, staring straight ahead, listening to classical music on the radio. Marla sits in the passenger seat twiddling her thumbs.

MARLA
Thanks for this Shelly.

SHELLY
(without looking over)
Of course.

Shelly turns up the radio and continues driving.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Marla and Shelly sit in the waiting room in silence. Shelly is reading a Home & Garden magazine, Marla leans over to peek at the article.

SHELLY
Do you mind, dear?

Marla leans back over and sits for a few moments. She opens her mouth to say something to Shelly but decides against it. A NURSE enters the room.

NURSE
Marla Mabe?

Marla walks over. Shelly doesn't look up from her magazine.

BACK HALLWAY

The nurse leads Marla down the hallway.

NURSE
Looks like you're about to have
your first ultrasound.

The nurse pulls a gown out of a nearby closet and takes Marla to an examination room.

NURSE (CONT'D)
You can change inside. Dr. Allen
will be with you in a few minutes.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marla goes into the examination room and takes off her sweater. She turns around and sees herself in the mirror. She looks closely at her growing stomach and caresses it. A knock on the door interrupts her.

MARLA
Just a second!

Marla hurries to finish changing into the gown then opens the door. DR. ALLEN, a handsome, older man enters the room.

DR. ALLEN
Marla? Nice to meet you.

Marla shakes his hand.

(CONTINUED)

DR. ALLEN (CONT'D)
If you'll just have a seat.

Marla sits down on the bed, the paper crinkles underneath her.

DR. ALLEN (CONT'D)
Here for the first ultrasound?

MARLA
Mhm.

DR. ALLEN
Looks like it's pretty overdue.

Dr. Allen flips the page on his clipboard and puts a stethoscope against her back.

DR. ALLEN (CONT'D)
First we'll do the check up, then
I'll take you over to do the
ultrasound. Sound good?

MARLA
Sure.

DR. ALLEN
Now, go ahead and breathe in for
me.

Marla takes a deep breath in.

INT. ULTRASOUND ROOM - DAY

Dr. Allen squirts a glob of lubricating jelly onto Marla's bare stomach and she lets out a shaky breath.

DR. ALLEN
Alright, ready to see your baby?

MARLA
More than ever.

Dr. Allen uses the machine to find the baby then points it out to Marla on the screen.

DR. ALLEN
There it is.

Marla lets in a small gasp and points at the screen.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

Those are the....

DR. ALLEN

Yep, there are the feet. And then over here is the head.

She looks at the screen for several moments, the light from it illuminates her face. She smiles and starts to tear up.

The screen goes back to black. Dr. Allen is wiping off the gel and sanitizing a section on her stomach.

MARLA

What are you doing?

DR. ALLEN

Oh, I'm just going to take a little sample from the baby.

MARLA

I thought it was just the ultrasound today.

DR. ALLEN

That was at your other doctor. This is a little something extra to make sure the baby is developing okay.

Dr. Allen takes out a large hollow needle.

MARLA

I wasn't told about this.

DR. ALLEN

Relax, Miss Mabe. It's for the good of the child.

Dr. Allen puts the tip of the needle against her stomach.

DR. ALLEN (CONT'D)

Now this may pinch a bit.

Dr. Allen inserts the needle into Marla's stomach and extracts fluid. Marla inhales sharply and lets out a yelp of pain.

INT. SHELLY'S CAR - DAY

Marla sits in the car by herself looking at her sonogram picture. She looks and sees Shelly talking to Dr. Allen at the back door of the office. Marla goes back to looking at her picture. Shelly hands the doctor a check.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Jackson looks at the sonogram picture at the kitchen counter.

JACKSON
There's my boy!

MARLA
(laughing)
Well, we don't exactly know it's a boy yet.

JACKSON
It's gonna be a boy, I know it.

MARLA
If you say so.

Marla takes the photo back from Jackson and puts it on the fridge with a magnet.

MARLA (CONT'D)
So, you feel ready for this?

JACKSON
Sure. Can't be that hard, right?

MARLA
Yeah, I guess so.

Jackson gets up from the counter and starts to put on his jacket. He goes over to Marla and give her a peck on the cheek.

JACKSON
Listen babe, I'm going to meet the guys. I'll see ya tonight.

Jackson leaves the kitchen and goes out to his truck. Marla goes over to the fridge and looks at the picture, then looks out the kitchen window where Jackson is pulling out of the driveway. A worried look washes over her face.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marla is woken up by a fight coming from outside. She sits up in her bed and reaches over for Jackson but he isn't home. She makes her way over to the window and pulls the curtains back.

Outside at Laina's trailer she sees Laina on her porch yelling down to her girlfriend at the bottom of the steps. The girlfriend has a duffel bag in her hands. She turns away from Laina, throws the bag into the trunk of her car, gets in and speeds away.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Marla comes out onto the front porch in her bathrobe. She looks over at Laina's porch and sees her sitting down, sobbing on her steps. Concerned, Marla starts to walk down the steps when she's blinded by the headlights of Jackson's truck pulling in.

He gets out and comes up onto the porch, slurring his speech.

JACKSON

The fuck are you doin' up?

MARLA

I just couldn't sleep.

Jackson glances over at Laina on her porch.

JACKSON

Don't see how you could with all that racket.

MARLA

Right. Let's go to bed, Jackson.

Marla helps Jackson into the trailer and gives one last look over at Laina before shutting the door behind them.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Marla washes Jackson's coffee mug in the sink and looks out the window. She watches Earl pick Jackson up for work. Once their car is out of the driveway Marla dumps her own full mug of coffee out in the sink.

MONTAGE - MARLA GETTING READY

(CONTINUED)

-- Bathroom -- Marla does her make up at bathroom counter in her bathrobe, her hair still wet. She wipes the fog off the mirror and carefully applies some lipstick.

-- Bedroom mirror -- Marla pulls her blouse tight against her stomach and examines herself in the mirror. She changes into another, more roomy, blouse.

-- Living Room -- Marla lays down on the couch and pushes her hand up against her baby bump in order to finish zipping her pants. She sits up and puts on her sneakers, then dabs a tissue with her tongue and tries to wipe the dirt off them.

END MONTAGE

EXT. LAINA'S PORCH - DAY

Marla walks up the steps to the porch and, as she goes to knock on Laina's door, she see an eviction notice taped to it.

She knocks, then, after a few moments, she knocks again. Mid-knock Laina answers, groggy and still in pajamas.

LAINA

Marla? What are you....

MARLA

Are you getting evicted?

LAINA

Oh! Oh, shit, the show!

MARLA

Laina, did you hear me? You're getting evicted.

Marla points to the eviction notice on the door. Laina glances at the notice, then rips it down and crumples it up.

LAINA

Oh, don't worry about that. Shelly keeps putting those up.

MARLA

Laina, I don't think she's joking.

LAINA

No, she's definitely not. But my lawyer's already told her you can't evict someone for not being white.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

Oh.

LAINA

Seriously Marla, don't worry about it. We're gonna have a good time today.

MARLA

You sure? We don't have to go.

LAINA

No! We're going; you promised. Come inside, it'll only take me a minute to get ready.

Laina smiles and tugs on Marla's sleeve.

INT. LAINA'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marla comes into the living room, the walls are white and there is only one old lounge chair by the window. Paperback novels and art supplies litter the floor around an easel in the corner.

MARLA

Your place is....

LAINA

At a loss for words, huh?

Laina goes into the bedroom next door to get ready. Marla bends down and looks at the paperbacks as she calls out to her through the open doorway.

MARLA

It's just not what I expected.

LAINA (O.S.)

You look lovely by the way.

Marla looks up from reading the back of the novel and blushes.

LAINA (O.S.)

I really am sorry I forgot.

MARLA

It's okay, I understand.

(CONTINUED)

LAINA (O.S.)
Last night was just really rough.

MARLA
I know.

Laina leans out of the doorframe, hairbrush in her hair.

LAINA
You heard?

Marla nods. Laina dips back into the bedroom.

LAINA (CONT'D)
I'm sorry if we woke you.

MARLA
Was that your, um....

LAINA (O.S.)
Well she was my girlfriend.

Everything is silent except for the noise of Laina brushing her hair. Marla approaches the doorway.

BEDROOM

MARLA
I'm sorry.

Laina wipes a tear from her eye before looking over.

LAINA
It's okay. You know, we've been off
and on for a while now.

She looks back in the mirror and finishes brushing her hair.

LAINA (CONT'D)
Guess we're off for good now.

EXT. LAINA'S PORCH - DAY

Marla and Laina exit the trailer and Laina gestures to the steps.

LAINA
After you.

Marla walks down and goes to the passenger side of Laina's car. Laina unlocks the car, gets in and leans over to unlock Marla's door.

INT. LAINA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

LAINA
Sorry, lock's broken.

Marla peers into the car. The backseat is filled with trash and art-related junk. There are bumper stickers on the dashboard, steering wheel and even ceiling. Marla clears off room on the seat and gets in.

LAINA (CONT'D)
And sorry about the mess.

MARLA
Now I see why your place is so bare. You live out of here.

Laina cranks the engine and starts to pull out of the park.

LAINA
You got me.

MARLA
No, I'm serious. This is incredible. Are you going for a record?

LAINA
Ok, ha-ha.

MARLA
Oh, wow. Is that what I think it is?

Marla points to the center console as Laina stops at the stop sign at the end of the road.

MARLA (CONT'D)
Oh my god, it is. A car phone. Do they even make these anymore?

LAINA
Here:

Laina pulls a scrapbook out of the back seat and tears a page out. She writes down the number to the car phone on it and hands it to Marla before resuming driving.

LAINA
Still works too. Try calling it sometime.

Marla looks at a sketch of a sailboat on the other side of the paper before folding it up and pocketing it.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

Well if it receives then it must
make calls too.

Marla goes to pick up the receiver.

LAINA (CONT'D)

Wait, don't --

Marla picks up the phone and the glove compartment pops
open. There's a handgun inside. Laina leans over and closes
the compartment back.

LAINA (CONT'D)

Sorry, don't know why that happens.

MARLA

Was that....

LAINA

Oh, I never use it. You can never
be too safe though, right?

Marla shifts uncomfortably in her seat.

MARLA

I guess. Guns just wig me out.

Laina glances over and notices Marla change in mood.

LAINA

I've never used it, Marla. Promise.

MARLA

It's not that. I just -- Sorry.

Marla's breathing becomes shaky and she rolls down the
window.

LAINA

Are you okay?

MARLA

Yeah, I'm sorry. I just haven't
seen one up close like that
since....

LAINA

Since when? Marla, you're scaring
me.

(CONTINUED)

Marla starts to gasp for her air. Laina pulls over to the side of the road and tries to calm her down. She puts her hand on Marla's back and she flinches. Marla manages to get out of the car and throws up on the side of the road.

EXTERIOR CAR

Laina gets out of the car and rushes around to the other side where Marla is leaning against it, calmer now.

MARLA

Sorry. Morning sickness.

Laina crouches down next to Marla and, after a moment's hesitation, takes her into a hug.

LAINA

That wasn't morning sickness.

Marla accepts her hug and slows her breathing down. After a few moments they pull apart and Laina sits down on the ground beside her. Marla's eyes start to well up.

MARLA

(voice breaking)

I guess I should explain --

Laina takes Marla's hand.

LAINA

You don't have to explain anything.

Marla squeezes Laina's hand then rests her head on her shoulder. Laina returns the gesture by resting her head on Marla's.

Marla closes her eyes and they remain like that for a few moments. Marla's breathing slows and then she wipes her tears.

MARLA

Alright, let's go.

She starts to get up and brush off her skirt. Laina looks up at her.

LAINA

You sure you're up for it?

Marla holds out her hand and helps Laina up.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

I'm sure. I'm not going to let it
ruin another one of my days.

Once Laina is up, Marla takes her into another hug.

MARLA (CONT'D)

Boy, I could use a smoke.

They both laugh and get back into the car.

EXT. ART GALLERY - DAY

Laina's car pulls into the parking lot of the gallery. Marla
and Laina get out and walk up the steps together.

INT. ART GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Laina leads Marla to the back of the gallery and they enter
a room labeled FEATURED ARTIST.

Inside, Laina's paintings align the wall. Marla walks around
the room in awe of the work. Laina walks over to Marla who
is staring at a painting of a woman.

LAINA

I've been trying to get my work
into this space since I was a kid.

MARLA

It's all so beautiful. I mean it.

LAINA

Thank you.

MARLA

I think this one might be my
favorite. Her lips are just --

LAINA

It's her, you know.

Marla's eyes widen and she looks over at Laina.

MARLA

Oh. Oh, I'm sorry.

LAINA

Don't be.

Laina looks forward towards her painting and, after some
hesitation, Marla returns her gaze as well.

(CONTINUED)

LAINA (CONT'D)
She was my first -- well, I guess
she was my first in just about
everything.

Silence falls between them. Marla takes Laina's hand.

LAINA (CONT'D)
There's always more beauty out
there though.

Laina turns toward Marla and starts to lean in close.

MARLA
....Jackson doesn't like you.

Laina chuckles wryly and takes her hand away.

LAINA
Surprise, surprise.

She turns her gaze back to the painting.

MARLA
He wasn't always like this.

LAINA
I think you're forgetting we were
neighbors long before he started
dating you.

MARLA
I don't know why he hates you.

LAINA
Your hubby's a homophobe, that's
why. Couldn't cope with the idea
that I might not be interested in
him.

MARLA
Fiancé.

LAINA
What?

MARLA
He's not my husband.

Laina turns to Marla and puts her hand on her neck, their
faces just a few inches away.

(CONTINUED)

LAINA
That's his kid in there, isn't it?

Marla nods and her eyes start to well.

LAINA (CONT'D)
Then he may as well be.

After a moment Laina moves her hand from Marla's neck to her shoulder.

LAINA (CONT'D)
C'mon. Let's get you home.

INT. LAINA'S CAR - DAY

A heavy silence hangs in the air. Marla is turned away from Laina in the passenger seat. Laina pulls onto the road that Puckett Parkway is on and drives by the Puckett House. Marla sees Earl's truck in the driveway and perks up in her seat.

MARLA
Oh, god.

LAINA
What?

MARLA
He's home.

Marla starts to panic. Laina pulls into Puckett Parkway, almost at her trailer.

LAINA
Who?

MARLA
He must've gotten off early.

LAINA
Marla, calm down. What's going on?

LAINA'S DRIVEWAY

Laina parks the car and turns her head away from Marla to see Jackson on his front porch. He sees Marla in the car and comes rushing over.

MARLA
I'm not supposed to be with you.

(CONTINUED)

LAINA

Marla, it's okay. I'll just tell --

Jackson yanks the passenger seat door open and pulls Marla out.

LAINA (CONT'D)

Wait, Jackson! Jackson!

Laina gets out of her car as Jackson drags Marla across the trailer park back to their place.

LAINA (CONT'D)

Let go of her, you asshole!

JACKSON

You stay out this!

Laina starts to run over but Marla puts her hands up.

MARLA

It's fine, Laina! Just go home,
it's fine.

Jackson gets her to the porch where he let's her go to open the door. Other neighbors are coming out on their porches.

LAINA

Marla, he's dragging you across the
park like a dog on a leash--

MARLA

It's fine, Laina! Stay out of it,
please.

JACKSON

You heard her! This ain't your damn
business!

Laina looks at Marla with her mouth agape. Jackson holds the door open for Marla and she walks up the steps. She turns to Laina before she goes inside.

MARLA

Go home. Please.

Marla goes inside. Jackson follows and slams the door shut.

INT. LIVING ROOM- CONTINUOUS

Jackson pulls Marla from the entryway into the living room. He throws her down on the couch and starts pacing the room. Marla pleads to him through tears.

MARLA

Jackson, I'm sorry! It was a mistake, I didn't mean --

JACKSON

Shut up!

MARLA

Please, Jackson! I'm sorry!

JACKSON

JUST SHUT UP!

Marla sits up on the couch and remains quiet, trying to maintain her sobbing while watching Jackson pace. Finally, Jackson gets down on his knees in front of Marla.

JACKSON

Do you love me, Marla?

MARLA

You know I do!

JACKSON

Okay, okay, fine. But answer this:

Jackson wipes the sweat off of his forehead.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

Her. Do you love her?

The question catches Marla off guard and stifles her sobbing. She looks at him, not saying anything.

Jackson punches Marla, knocking her off the couch onto the ground.

He stands up and looks down at her. His eyes start to tear up and he suddenly punches a hole in the wall. Then he picks her up and carries her limp body into the bedroom.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Two officers stand at the door, one of them knocks. Jackson answers after a few seconds.

OFFICER 1
Are you Jackson Puckett?

JACKSON
That's me.

OFFICER 1
Sir, we got a report from next door that there was a domestic violence dispute on this property.

JACKSON
No sir, I don't know nothing about that. My girl isn't even home.

OFFICER 2
If you don't mind, could we come in and take a look --

JACKSON
Wait a minute. Gerald, that you buddy?

OFFICER 2
Well, that's Officer Mull to you.

JACKSON
No shit? Gerald Mull. Remember me? Played on the team together?

Officer Mull lowers his glasses a bit to get a better look at Jackson.

OFFICER MULL
Puckett? How you doin' man?

JACKSON
Not bad, not bad at all. Listen, if you guys want to come in...?

OFFICER MULL
Nah, that's okay.

JACKSON
Yeah, there's always someone screamin their head off in the park. Must be what they heard.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marla stands beside the bedroom door, listening in. Her right eye is swollen shut and starting to turn purple.

OFFICER 1 (O.S.)
We'll take a look around the park.

OFFICER MULL (O.S.)
Sorry to bother you, Puck.

JACKSON (O.S.)
No problem. Have a good one, man.

Jackson shuts the door and Marla hurries back over to the bed and lays down.

Jackson can be heard shuffling around in the kitchen. After a few moments he enters the bedroom with a baggy of ice cubes. He turns on the lamp on the nightstand beside Marla and kneels down beside her.

JACKSON
Hey, Mar. You awake?

MARLA
Hmm?

JACKSON
Here put this on that eye.

Marla turns her face to the light. Ashamed, Jackson turns his face away from her and hands her the bag of ice.

MARLA
Thanks.

JACKSON
You understand, don't you? Just stay away from her.

MARLA
I understand.

JACKSON
And if she knows what's good for her she'll stay away from you too.

Jackson gets up to leave but turns around in the doorway.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Oh, and Marla? Dad called while you were out. Said something about wanting to see you.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

What?

JACKSON

Yeah, said he'd go by the shoe store if he didn't see you in the next few days. Just give him a call, no use in seeing him looking like... that.

MARLA

Sure.

Jackson leaves the room. Marla puts the bag up to her eye and starts to quietly cry.

INT. ENTRYWAY - DAY

The phone starts ringing. After a few rings Marla emerges from the bedroom, disheveled. She goes to put the bag of ice up her eye but it's melted so she tosses it in the trashcan then rushes over to the phone and picks up the receiver.

INTERCUT- ENTRYWAY/PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

MARLA

Hello?

Mel is calling from the principal's secretary's phone in the office. The secretary watches Mel talk on the phone and taps her long fingernails against the desk.

MEL

Marla, where are you?

MARLA

What?

MEL

You were supposed to pick me up over an hour ago.

Marla has a confused look on her face for a few moments until she remembers.

MEL (CONT'D)

We were going to practice driving?

MARLA

Right! Mel, I'm so sorry. I'm leaving now, be there in fifteen.

(CONTINUED)

Mel hands the phone back to the secretary who is still giving her a look.

Marla hangs up the receiver and examines her eye in a small mirror next to the front door.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

Marla comes out onto the front porch wearing dark sunglasses and a coat over her bathrobe. She starts to walk down the steps but stops at the patio table on her porch. On it sits a pot of daisies with a note attached.

Marla reads the note then casts a worried glance over to Laina's trailer.

EXT. FRONT OF SCHOOL - DAY

Marla pulls up to the front of the school, Mel is sitting on the bench, tapping her foot. She rushes over to the driver's side and gets in, Marla scoots over.

INT. JACKSON'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

MEL

Where were you? My driver's test is next week. I need all the practice I can --

Mel stops talking when she sees Marla. Marla starts to shift in her seat and tries looking away.

MARLA

What?

Mel keeps giving her a concerned look.

MARLA (CONT'D)

Mel, what? I thought you were in a rush to get going --

Mel snatches the sunglasses off Marla's face. She recoils, turning her eye away from Mel who grips the steering wheel and stares out the front windshield.

MEL

(whisper)
I'll kill him.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA
Wait! I just fell down.

MEL
I'll kill him!

MARLA
Mel, please! Calm down. He didn't
mean to --

Mel turns towards Marla, throwing the sunglasses in the floorboard. Marla's eyes start to well.

MEL
The hell he didn't!

MARLA
He was just upset. It was my fault.

Marla starts sobbing.

MARLA (CONT'D)
It was my fault.

Mel takes her sister into her arms and holds her.

MEL
Shh, don't say that.

Marla sobs and Mel holds her until she calms down.

Mel takes Marla by the shoulders and looks into her eyes, failing to hide a slight grimace at first at sight of the bruise.

MEL (CONT'D)
We're telling mom.

MARLA
No! No, we can't.

Marla wipes her eyes and nose before speaking.

MARLA (CONT'D)
You can't. She wouldn't care
anyway.

MEL
That's not true.

MARLA
It is and you know it is.

(CONTINUED)

Mel takes her hands away from her shoulders and turns away, putting her head down on the steering wheel. When she raises her head back up she's calmer.

MEL

Okay. Then you're moving out.

MARLA

Mel, I can't --

MEL

I'm serious Marla. You're not staying there. We'll get a place. They're leasing those apartments over on Beechwood.

MARLA

...I don't know.

MEL

You're doing it. Promise me.

Marla takes a beat, considering it.

MARLA

Okay.

MEL

Promise.

MARLA

I promise... but I don't get paid until next Friday. We have to wait until then.

MEL

Fine. I get my license, you get your paycheck and then we're getting you out of there. Deal?

Mel holds up her locket. After a moment Marla takes her locket and touches it against her sister's.

MARLA

Deal.

EXT. LAINA'S PORCH - DAY

Laina pulls into her driveway and gets out of her car. She locks her door and something catches her eye.

She walks over to the trashcan by Jackson's trailer and looks at the pot of daises sitting in it. She starts to tear up. Laina takes the daises out of the trash.

INT. SUPER SHOE STORE BREAK ROOM - DAY

Marla goes into the break room with heavy make-up covering her eye. She touches it up in a little mirror in her locker before putting on her name tag.

She goes over to the machine to clock in, looking for her punch card. She checks a second time then walks back to Bill's office.

BILL'S OFFICE

Marla knocks on the door and opens it. Bill sits with his feet up on his desk, not looking away from his computer.

MARLA
Hey, Bill?

BILL
Yup?

MARLA
Do you have my punch card? I need to clock in.

BILL
Sure do. It's over there.

Bill gestures to a trash can by the door. Marla bends down, picks up her card and uncrumples it.

MARLA
I don't understand.

Bill sighs, takes his feet off the desk and swivels his chair to face her.

BILL
Do I have to lay it out for ya?
You're out.

MARLA
Fired? What did I do?

BILL
You lied about the bun you got in your pretty little oven.

(CONTINUED)

Bill points to Marla's stomach, she puts her hands over it instinctively.

BILL (CONT'D)

I warned you, Marla. I won't have any teen moms trying to run the store.

MARLA

But I --

BILL

You're out. Good luck, kid... Both of you.

Bill swivels away from her and puts his feet back up on his desk. Marla puts the card back in the trash and exits.

INT. LIVING ROOM- DAY

Jackson comes in from work and walks into the living room to see Marla laying on the couch watching TV.

JACKSON

You're home? Thought you worked today.

Marla doesn't look away from the TV.

MARLA

I got fired.

JACKSON

Fired?... Well, can't say I'm too upset.

Marla doesn't say anything, she just keeps watching TV. After a few moments Jackson just shrugs and goes into the bedroom.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Marla sits outside on the front porch, smoking a cigarette. Laina comes out on her front porch with a paperback book in hand and sees her. They make eye contact. Marla puts out her cigarette and goes inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Marla lies in Jackson's recliner in her bathrobe, all the blinds and curtains are closed. She is leafing through her parenting book when there's a knock on the door that startles her. She waits for a moment until the knock happens again.

INT. ENTRYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Marla enters the dimly lit entryway and puts her eye up to the light streaming in through the peephole. Another knock hits the door and Marla jumps back.

LAINA (O.S.)

Marla! Please open the door. I know you're in there!

Marla doesn't make any move to open the door, she stands in the entryway and fidgets with her hands.

LAINA (CONT'D)

I'm not going anywhere until you open this door!

MARLA

... Go home Laina!

LAINA (O.S.)

Open the door!

After a few moments Marla's hand moves slowly toward the door knob. She cracks the door, leaving the chain locked and peers out at Laina with the left side of her face.

EXT AND INT

MARLA

What do you want?

LAINA

I just... I just wanted to see you.

MARLA

Alright, well, here I am. Now go.

LAINA

Why are you being like this? I haven't seen you leave the house in days.

Marla doesn't say anything, she starts to turn away.

(CONTINUED)

LAINA (CONT'D)
Are you okay?

MARLA
I'm fine, Laina.

LAINA
After everything with Jackson I'm
just... I'm worried about you.

MARLA
(aggressive)
Well don't be, okay? Go home.

LAINA
Marla, please. Talk to me.

Marla turns away from the door, a tear falls from the eye
she's hiding from Laina.

LAINA (CONT'D)
Can I just come in and --

MARLA
No! Dammit, go home! How many times
do I have to tell you? Please, just
get out of here.

LAINA
I don't understand. I thought...
well I thought we were --

MARLA
I don't care what you thought we
were! Whatever this was. It's over,
okay? I don't want to see you ever
again.

Laina doesn't make a move to leave. Marla turns away from
the crack in the door, closes her eyes and wipes away
another tear before turning back around.

MARLA (CONT'D)
I'm not a dyke, okay? Is that what
you need to hear?

LAINA
Why would you say that?

Marla leans in close to the crack in the door.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

Go. Home.

Marla slams the door and immediately sinks down to the floor and sobs silently.

EXT. DMV - DAY

Marla sits on a bench outside of the DMV in her sunglasses watching the sun set.

A car pulls around the corner and parks in a nearby space. Mel gets out of the car, beaming with excitement. She hugs the DMV WORKER then rushes over to hug her sister.

MEL

I got it! Look!

She waves a temporary license slip in front of Marla. Marla tries her best to mirror her sister's excitement.

MARLA

I didn't doubt you for a second.

MEL

That's a lie and you know it.

MARLA

Maybe a little.

MEL

We have to celebrate!

MARLA

We can go wherever you want. My old clunker is officially yours.

Marla hands Mel the keys and she jingles them with excitement before rushing over to a car parked a few spaces down.

The two girls get in and Mel speeds away. The DMV worker sighs, shakes his head and goes back inside.

EXT. DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Mel pulls into a parking space in front of huge movie screen where the beginning of a horror movie is just starting to play. Mel takes the speakers and hooks them on the inside of the car.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

I'll go grab some popcorn.

Marla gets out of the car and walks across the parking lot towards the concession stand.

As Marla walks over she looks into a car window and sees Laina and her girlfriend watching the movie. They're sitting rigidly next to each other in the car, Laina is keeping as much space between them as possible. Marla immediately ducks down out of sight and makes her way to the concessions.

INT. MEL'S CAR - NIGHT

Marla gets into the car and hands a bag of popcorn to Mel who is intently watching the movie.

MEL

Thanks.

MARLA

No problem.

Marla starts to watch the movie but keeps casting worried glances over at her sister.

MARLA (CONT'D)

Hey, Mel?

A climactic scene in the movie hits and Mel jumps.

MEL

Shit! Did you see that?

MARLA

Yeah. Mel?

MEL

What's up?

Mel doesn't divert her attention from the screen.

MARLA

I meant to tell you. I, um, well I lost my job.

Mel looks over at her sister, but keeps glancing back at the movie.

(CONTINUED)

MEL

Oh. Man, that really blows.

MARLA

Yeah, it, uh, definitely blows.

MEL

Well don't worry, I'm sure you'll find something else. Bill was a creep anyway, right?

Mel turns back to the movie and munches on her popcorn.

MARLA

Well, that's not the issue.

MEL

Huh?

Marla puts her hand up to her mouth as if she's about to be sick and gulps before speaking.

MARLA

Mel, if I don't have a job then I can't afford a place for us.

Mel stops chewing and looks over at her sister.

MEL

Don't tell me....

MARLA

I'm sorry, Mel. I just don't think it's going to work.

MEL

And living with that abusive asshole will?

Marla grimaces and puts her hand on her stomach.

MARLA

Don't start.

MEL

He'll just keep hurting you. And what happens when he takes it too far? What then, Marla?

MARLA

I'm going to the bathroom.

Marla gets out of the car and slams the door shut.

EXT. DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATER BATHROOM - NIGHT

Marla walks out of the bathroom wiping her mouth and holding her stomach when she runs into someone. Her glasses fall off and Marla turns the right side of her face away from the harsh fluorescent light as she bends down to pick them up.

MARLA

Sorry!

Marla scrambles to find her glasses in the shadows.

LAINA

Marla?

Marla looks up into the light, revealing her eye.

LAINA (CONT'D)

Oh my god. Marla, what happened?

Marla looks back down quickly and puts her sunglasses on her face. Laina squats down on her level.

MARLA

Nothing. I'm fine.

LAINA

Is that why you've been avoiding me?

Laina gently takes the glasses off and puts her hand up to Marla's face. She winces slightly.

LAINA (CONT'D)

Did Jackson... did Jackson do that?

Marla looks into Laina's eyes and her lip starts to tremble. She breaks down in tears and Laina holds her. A MAN and WOMAN that are walking by stop.

MAN

Ma'am? Is she okay?

LAINA

Just give us a second, please.

MARLA

(sobbing)

I don't know what to do.

LAINA

It's okay. We'll figure it out.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

I just don't know -- shit.

Marla doubles over, clutching her stomach. She stops crying and passes out in Laina's arms. A few more people gather around.

LAINA

Oh god.

(to the man)

Call an ambulance!

INT. E.R. WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Laina and Mel sit in the waiting room. Mel is leaned over with her head in her hands and Laina is rubbing her back. The DOCTOR approaches.

DOCTOR

Ladies? Are you the family of Miss Mabe?

Mel's head pops up.

MEL

I'm her sister.

DOCTOR

(to Laina)

And you are?

LAINA

I'm just a friend.

DOCTOR

(to Mel)

Well, your sister is going to be alright. She's ready to take visitors.

(to Laina)

Only family members though.

Mel gives Laina an apologetic look but gets up from her chair.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

(to Mel)

I'm afraid I do have bad news, however.

(CONTINUED)

LAINA
What is it?

DOCTOR
Well... she seems to have
miscarried. That's what was causing
the abdominal pains.

Mel and Laina take a moment to react to the news.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
I can take you back if you'd like.

Mel looks over at Laina.

LAINA
You should go.

Mel leaves with the doctor and Laina lets out a shaky sigh.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Mel sits in a chair by the hospital bed and holds Marla's hand. Marla is looking away from her out the window. She has a blank expression on her face. A heavy silence lingers

MEL
....Marla?

Marla doesn't look over.

MEL (CONT'D)
Marla. I need you to look at me.

After a moment Marla turns her head towards Mel, keeping the same expression.

MEL (CONT'D)
Earl, Jackson and Shelly are on
their way.

Marla's eyes shift back to the window.

MEL (CONT'D)
Look at me.

Her eyes shift back to Mel.

MEL (CONT'D)
You're going to go home with
Jackson. Tomorrow, when he leaves
for work, I want you to pack a bag.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MEL (CONT'D) (cont'd)
 I'm picking you up first thing
 after school and we're sneaking you
 out.

Mel takes Marla's locket off the bedside table and fastens
 it around her neck for her.

MEL (CONT'D)
 Deal?

Marla gives a weak nod.

INT. EARL'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Earl speeds down the highway toward the hospital. Shelly is
 in the passenger seat.

SHELLY
 Slow down, Earl. She isn't going
 anywhere.

EARL
 I've had about enough of your
 goddamn mouth tonight!

SHELLY
 Fine... just don't forget it was
 you that put that girl in there.

Earl looks over at Shelly in disbelief. She keeps her rigid
 gaze starting out the window.

EARL
 Me? This is your fault!

SHELLY
 Is that so?

EARL
 You're the one who had the doctor
 go poking around her baby!

SHELLY
 Do I need to remind you why I had
 Dr. Allen take the sample?

EARL
 Woman, you knew exactly what --

Shelly cuts her gaze over to Earl, suddenly enraged.

(CONTINUED)

SHELLY

Don't you "woman" me! I'm not going to take the blame for this!

Earl is briefly taken aback by Shelly's change in demeanor. He starts to open his mouth to retort.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

No! I'm not finished! You are the one that slept with that whore. She wouldn't even be in our lives anymore if it weren't for you.

The truck goes back to being silent and Shelly shifts her gaze out the window once again.

EARL

I didn't make you send her to that doctor. We didn't need to know.

Shelly starts laughing.

SHELLY

You know? I thought you'd be happy to hear she'd lost it.

(turning to him)

You're going to save a hell of a lot of money not paying that child support.

EXT. HOSPITAL E.R. - NIGHT

Earl and Shelly pull into the parking lot and walk up the doors to the E.R. where Jackson is smoking. Jackson puts his cigarette out and goes inside with his parents.

INT. E.R. WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Earl goes up to the NURSE at the reception desk but Jackson cuts in front of his father.

JACKSON

Lookin' for Marla Mabe. You got her room number?

Laina looks up from her chair to the desk where the Puckett's are standing. They don't notice her.

NURSE

Are you the family?

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON
Yeah, I'm the fiancé. These are my
folks.

The nurse starts to say something but is interrupted by
Laina approaching the desk.

LAINA
Ma'am? You can't let these people
back there. Especially him.

JACKSON
Fuck are you doin' here?

LAINA
I'm here because I care about
Marla. Unlike any of you.

JACKSON
Bitch, I oughta --

Jackson lunges at Laina but Earl holds him back. The nurse
picks up the phone and calls over the doctor.

LAINA
(to the nurse)
Have you seen what he did to the
patient? Have you seen her eye?

JACKSON
Shut your goddamn mouth!

The same doctor from earlier steps into the situation.

DOCTOR
What exactly is going on here?

Jackson and Laina both start to speak at once.

JACKSON
-- It's a goddamn lie. Everything
she's saying.

DOCTOR
Okay, okay! Quiet down!
(to the Puckett's)
Are you the family?

JACKSON
I live with her for chrissakes!

(CONTINUED)

DOCTOR

Sir, please. One more disruption like that and I'll ask you to leave.

EARL

Yes sir, we're the family. Sorry, he's just worried about his girl.

DOCTOR

Okay, that's all I need to know. You folks can go back.

(to Laina)

Ma'am I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

LAINA

This is bullshit!

DOCTOR

Ma'am!

Two hospital guards arrive at the scene. Laina puts up her hands in a surrender and walks toward the doors. Jackson and Earl start walking back to the room but Shelly lags behind, grabbing Laina's arm.

SHELLY

Ms. Ramos? Go ahead and count this as your final eviction notice. Have your things out by the morning.

With that Shelly moves down the hall towards Jackson and Earl. Laina runs her fingers through her hair before exiting through the automatic doors.

EXT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Jackson and Marla arrive back at the trailer well past midnight. Jackson gets out of the truck and goes into the house, Marla follows. She is still wearing a hospital bracelet and carries her white sneakers in her hand.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Marla starts to go back to the bedroom but Jackson comes out with a pillow and blanket and hands them to her.

JACKSON

Here.

(CONTINUED)

Marla looks down at the the blanket and pillow then back up at Jackson with a confused look.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

You'll be sleeping on the couch
until you figure out what team
you're gonna play for.

Jackson shuts the bedroom door and Marla walks over to the couch and lies down.

Marla fishes around inside the pillowcase and pulls out the sketch of the sailboat with Laina's number written on the back. She recites the number over and over to herself until she falls asleep.

INT. LIVING ROOM- DAY

Marla is woken up by the sounds of Jackson getting ready for work and shuffling around the house. He throws the curtains in the living room back, letting in the sunlight. Marla sits up and rubs her eyes.

She watches him move around the house. He walks past her three or four times without taking any notice of her. When he gets to the door to leave he takes the keys to the truck off the ring by the door.

MARLA

You're taking the truck?

JACKSON

Just the keys. Can't have you going
to anymore art shows.

Jackson leaves abruptly and Marla closes her eyes and breathes. After a moment she gets up with more vigor.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marla packs her clothes into a suitcase on the bed. Her breathing starts to become rapid.

She sinks down to the ground by her nightstand and tries to slow her breathing. After a few moments she grabs the empty glass on her nightstand and makes her way into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Marla fills the glass in the sink and starts to drink it down.

Once she's finished and her breathing has slowed she turns around and see the sonogram picture on the fridge. Marla takes the picture off the fridge and goes back into her bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marla curls up on the bed by the open suitcase and holds her sonogram picture. She starts to weep.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Marla is woken up several hours later by a knock on the door. She gets up and makes her way out of the bedroom.

INT. ENTRYWAY - DAY

Marla checks the peephole and opens the door. Laina is standing there. Marla cranes her neck to look out the door and sees her car is running.

MARLA

Going somewhere?

LAINA

I guess I'm here to say goodbye.

MARLA

What do you mean?

LAINA

I think I got my final eviction notice last night.

The color drains from Marla's face and her eyes tear up. She pulls Laina inside the house and embraces her.

MARLA

I don't want you to go.

They stand in the entryway hugging each other, Marla starts crying into Laina's shoulder. Marla lifts her head for air and sees Laina is crying too. They hold their gaze for a moment, then Marla leans in and kisses her.

(CONTINUED)

After the first kiss, Laina kisses her back, longer this time. Marla starts crying and they pull away.

LAINA
Come with me.

MARLA
What?

Laina wipes away Marla's tears.

LAINA
Let's just go.

Marla looks for a long time at Laina, then glances over her shoulder at the open doorway to the bedroom where the suitcase lies on the bed. She looks back at Laina.

MARLA
We can't.

LAINA
What's stopping us?

Laina puts up her pinky. Marla raises her hand up slowly and wraps her own pinky around it.

MARLA
Okay. Let's do it.

Marla rushes back into the bedroom, Laina follows.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marla continues packing up her suitcase, rushing around the room and asking Laina to grab things for her. She takes a second to check her watch.

MARLA
Dammit.

LAINA
What is it?

MARLA
Jackson should be home any minute.

Laina finishes grabbing a few coats out the closet but pauses on her way to by the window.

(CONTINUED)

LAINA
Marla?

MARLA
What?

LAINA
Earl's truck is pulling in up the
hill.

Marla looks up from packing her suitcase and starts to panic. She takes the coats from Laina, throws them in the suitcase, then checks the window.

Marla runs back over to Laina who is still getting clothes out of the closet and stops her.

MARLA
You have to get out of here.

LAINA
I'm not leaving you.

MARLA
He'll kill you, Laina!

Marla takes a moment to breathe and compose herself.

MARLA (CONT'D)
Okay, listen. Mel is supposed to be picking me up soon. I'll sneak out with her and... and we'll meet you at the mall! Just drive to the mall.

Laina nods in agreement then kisses Marla. Marla holds her there for a few moments before pulling away.

MARLA (CONT'D)
Now go.

Laina rushes out of the room while Marla zips up her suitcase and drags it into the closet, shutting the door behind it.

EXT. PUCKETT HOUSE - DAY

Earl and Jackson get out the truck and see Laina's car pull out of the the trailer park.

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON
What the hell? What's she still
doing there?

EARL
Calm down, Jackson.

JACKSON
She was supposed to be out by the
morning. She's been down there all
day with Marla!

Jackson slams the door to the truck and starts down the hill
toward the trailer park. Earl rushes after him and grabs him
by the shoulder.

EARL
Now boy, just hold on a damn
minute! You don't need to be
anywhere near that girl.

JACKSON
I'm fed up with this shit! They've
been going behind my back since she
moved in!

EARL
Son, it'll do both of you some good
if you just go in the house and
calm down. I'll talk to her.

Earl turns Jackson toward the house and he walks back up the
hill. Earl makes his way down to the trailer.

INT. ENTRYWAY - DAY

There's a knock on the door. Marla answers it expecting
Jackson but instead Earl comes barging in.

EARL
What was that girl doing down here,
Mar?

MARLA
Earl? Who?

EARL
You know exactly who.

MARLA
Laina? She wasn't here.

Earl grabs Marla by the arm and pulls her face close.

(CONTINUED)

EARL

Yeah? When did you start wearing lipstick then?

Marla puts her hand to her lips then looks at the lipstick on her finger. Earl violently wipes Laina's lipstick off of Marla's mouth and she pushes him away.

MARLA

Get off of me, you bastard!

EARL

Why are you doing this, Marla?

MARLA

Doing what, Earl? Say it!

Earl falters with his words, then just resorts to a glare. Marla starts to step closer towards him.

MARLA (CONT'D)

Why am I with her? Is that what you want to ask?

Marla is right in front of him now.

MARLA (CONT'D)

I'll tell you why: she cares. She cares more than any of you.

EARL

Bullshit. You get in one fight with Jackson and suddenly you're in love with a lady?

MARLA

Loving her doesn't change who I am.

Earl aggressively takes her by the shoulders.

EARL

Jesus, listen to yourself!

Earl becomes more gentle and caresses her cheek with one hand.

EARL (CONT'D)

She'll never be able to give you what we had, Mar.

MARLA

She'll never guilt me into sex, is that what you mean? You act like it

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MARLA (cont'd)
 was gift; like it was something I
 wanted, you sick son of bitch!

Earl slaps Marla across the face. She recoils, then looks back up. Her lip is bleeding.

MARLA (CONT'D)
 (chuckling)
 I knew it must run in the family.

EARL
 You watch your damn mouth!

MARLA
 For once, I'm going to say
 everything I need to say. But I
 imagine this bloody lip will speak
 for itself when the police see what
 the Puckett Boys have been up to.

Earl lunges at Marla but she dodges him. While he's turned around, Marla takes the corded phone off the wall mount. When Earl turns around she hits him in the head with it.

Earl falls to the ground, passed out and bleeding from the temple. Marla looks down at him and her breathing begins to speed up. She looks at the phone in her hands and dials a number.

INT. LAINA'S CAR - DAY

Laina's car phone starts ringing. She picks it up, immediately closing the glove department after it opens.

LAINA
 Hello -- Woah, slow down.

EXT. LAINA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Laina's car pulls off to the side of road and turns around. She speeds back down the road just as it starts to rain.

INT. ENTRYWAY - DAY

Marla, comes into the entryway, dragging her suitcase with her. She lifts it over Earl's body and puts it by the door. She struggles to fasten the phone back to the wall.

EXT. PUCKETT HOUSE - DAY

Jackson paces around on the front porch, then sees Laina's car speed by the house down toward the trailer park. He punches one of the columns on the porch then runs down off the steps.

INT. ENTRYWAY - DAY

Marla walks over to a window and pulls the curtains back. She sees Laina's car coming down the hill. Marla breathes a sigh of relief just as Earl rises up behind her.

INT. LAINA'S CAR - DAY

Laina skids to a stop then picks up her car phone.

INT. ENTRYWAY - DAY

Earl knocks Marla to the floor and gets on top of her.

MARLA

Earl! Stop it!

Marla tries to kick him between the legs but he punches her, then pins down her legs.

EARL

Never heard that one before.

Earl gets up on his knees and starts to loosen his belt. As he unzips his zipper a bullet rips through his chest.

He falls to the ground beside Marla revealing Laina in the doorway behind him with the handgun outstretched in front of her. She's dripping wet from the rain.

Laina let's out a shaky breath and slowly lowers her arms. Marla is in a state of shock, still on the floor.

LAINA

He's gone, Marla. You're safe --

Jackson pushes Laina against the doorway. He wrestles the gun away from her and kicks her to the ground.

Jackson looks over at his father's body before aiming the gun down at Laina. Marla snaps out of her shock and sits up.

(CONTINUED)

MARLA
DON'T! Jackson, please! Don't do
it!

JACKSON
Why not, huh?!

MARLA
Jackson, just put down the gun.

JACKSON
She just killed my dad!

MARLA
I know, but listen...

Jackson ignores her and cocks the gun toward Laina.

MARLA (CONT'D)
He's been lying to you for a long
time.

Jackson's finger starts to wrap around the trigger.

MARLA (CONT'D)
It was his baby.

Shocked, Jackson turns toward Marla, lowering the gun a bit.

JACKSON
What did you just --

Laina kicks Jackson's feet out from under him and the gun
flies from his hands.

It lands in front of Marla. She slowly picks it up in her
hands. Her eyes widen.

QUICK FLASHES - MARLA'S FATHER'S SUICIDE

--Marla digs through her backpack.

--The bus honks it's horn as she gets in the house.

--Marla finds the book on the table. She sees her father
through the screen door.

--Marla opens the screen door as her father lifts his beer
up to take the last sip with his back turned to her.

--The crumpled beer can hits the ground.

--Marla opens her mouth.

(CONTINUED)

--A gun is revealed in her father's other hand.

--His silhouette is seen in Marla's eyes. The bus honks its horn.

--Her father raises the gun to his head.

--The gunshot goes off and the silhouette in Marla's eyes falls. She drops her book to the ground. The honking horn covers her scream.

BACK TO SCENE

Jackson tackles Marla. They wrestle on the ground with the gun. A shot goes off.

CUT TO BLACK

FADE IN:

EXT. TRAILER - DAY

Mel's car pulls into the trailer park. Jackson's trailer is surrounded by cop cars and taped off. Mel gets out of the car and rushes over to the tape in the pouring rain. She tries to go under it but an OFFICER stops her.

OFFICER

Ma'am, I'm sorry, this is a crime scene.

MEL

Please! I have to get in there.

OFFICER

I don't think you want to do that. There are two bodies inside.

Mel's eyes widen and she starts to become hysterical.

MEL

My sister is in there!

OFFICER

Ma'am please --

MEL

I need to see her! Let me by!

Mel tries to push past the officer but he grabs her by the shoulders.

(CONTINUED)

OFFICER

Ma'am! Neither of the deceased are female. Your sister isn't here.

Mel looks at the officer, confused. The officer lets go and walks away. Mel wipes the rain off her face and looks around. She sees Shelly, wrapped in a blanket, standing by an ambulance. An officer is talking to her but she is catatonic.

Mel looks the other way and sees a few officers leaned down around tire tracks in the mud. She looks behind them at Laina's trailer.

EXT. LAINA'S PORCH - DAY

Mel comes up the steps and knocks on Laina's door. After getting no answer she knocks again.

Mel gives up and turns around to find the pot of daisies on the patio table behind her. Overwhelmed, she sits down at the table, puts her head in her arms and starts to cry. When she lifts her head back up she notices something shiny inside the pot.

She pulls out Marla's locket and opens it up. A piece of paper falls out of it. Mel unfolds it and looks at the picture of the sailboat with a confused look on her face. She turns the paper over and a weak smile forms across her face as she looks up out at the long, dirt road leading out of the trailer park.

INT. LAINA'S CAR - DAY

Marla sits in the passenger seat of Laina's car looking at her sonogram picture. After a moment she picks up the car phone and puts it inside the glove compartment, covering up the gun.

Marla looks down at her white shoes, now caked in mud. She looks over at Laina in the driver's seat.

Marla looks back at her shoes and starts to untie them. Once she gets them off her feet she rolls down the window and tosses them out.

LAINA

What'd you do that for?

(CONTINUED)

MARLA

They don't fit anymore.

Marla takes one of Laina's hands off the steering wheel and holds it.

EXT. LAINA'S CAR - DAY

The car drives down the empty road and pulls onto the highway, out of the rain and into the sunset.

The car phone starts ringing

THE END