

VIV THROUGH THE NIGHT

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In silence. A vanity mirror bisects the reflection of a brunette's smiling face into two times:

LEFT HALF: BRITTA MORAN (39), face faintly pitted by acne scars. Crying and dry-heaving as her features arc deceitfully into a pained, airless grin.

RIGHT HALF: BRITTA MORAN (6), flushed with jubilation as she watches her father: the shirtless, bespectacled BILL (20s), nearly seven white feet tall, rotating through a hammy "chicken dance" in the doorway behind. His crotch-cutting, early-80s Florida Gators shorts help the scene.

Clapping beside or, perhaps, *beneath* him is the gracile young mother, VIV (20s), who barely reaches the height of her husband's chest.

Bill slinks up behind little Britta, hugs her shoulders. He whispers something that rockets her smile to a higher amplitude, a cackle. This continues while-

LEFT HALF: The grin strains with torment, exacerbates. Older Britta's arm winds up and PUNCHES THE MIRROR so that it CRACKS, eliminating the little girl, the father and the fun.

And we've become totally older, totally ailing within our own faded FLORIDA GATORS t-shirt, its snug fit redistributed in our athletic twilight. Scrub bottoms dangle a DR. MORAN -- CHIEF OF ANESTHESIOLOGY hospital badge.

We eye Viv through the MIRROR BREACH:

Now in her sixties, bald, cannula in her nose and reclined in near-death on one side of an extra-long king bed. Her face sallow and bloated by the weight of CHEMO replacing her: a pump siphons slaughter into her clavicle port, and has helped make everything below her neck a wisp of what once was.

Despite this frailty, some occult current pull-starts her, and she loses herself in a *slow, creaky head dance*.

Britta darkens as the dance spreads to Viv's body, each movement more mindless and lost than the last. She averts her eyes. *Nothing occult about it.*

CLOSE on a large mounted CANVAS PRINT above the bed: Bill as a basketball center for the Florida Gators in the 80s, boxing out a smaller player in a packed O'Connell Center.

CLOSE on a bedside trash bag, mounting with feculent diapers.

The pump CHIRPS. Britta approaches, mirrors Viv's movements without directly looking at her, so she can steady her.

Britta reaches in, unhooks the line from the port, drains it into a bedpan. She looks directly at Viv.

We need this character, our mother.

Who -- arms now folded, feet tapping and head torquing in a swivet to some interior song --

-- cannot be needed.

BRITTA (O.S.)
Brain mets. Do you know what that means?

She kisses her mother's weaving forehead -- her head moves with Viv's as her lips holds the kiss. Britta shuts her eyes.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Britta pacing on the phone. The voice of an annoyed young woman on the other end.

MIKAELA (O.S.)
Yeah. You coming?

BRITTA
You're at your Dad's?

MIKAELA (O.S.)
When have I ever been...?

BRITTA
Then take grandpa's truck.
(beat)
Please.

The other end HANGS UP.

EXT. MORAN RESIDENCE - NIGHT

A weathered vigil at the front door, aged into a shrine. Hundreds of items: melted candles, framed photos of young BILL and the team, soot-covered stuffed animals, faded signs:

"WE LOVE YOU BM #70"

"RIP MORAN TOWER, 1958-1983"

An old TV/DVD combo beneath an overhang plays an interview with grainy footage: A TALL, BESPECTACLED MAN in his sixties, wearing an orange and blue tie, grins and shake his head with glee as he remembers something. Caption beneath reading "Ted Andrushko, Bill Moran's former coach."

FORMER TEAMMATE

Generally the first thing to come out of Bill's mouth at any given time was something that people spend their whole lives trying to say. He just had that way about him, like there was truth in his sweat!

Britta shuts it off for the night, dumps decayed flowers and algal water from one of twenty old vases, replaces it with fresh roses. She hears the huffing of a DIESEL ENGINE. About-faces to see it in:

An OLD RED PICKUP with an electrician's pack over the bed climbs the driveway. Decal on the passenger door with a silhouette of tall Bill reaching up, soldering: "MORAN TOWER ELECTRICAL."

As the truck parks, we see HALF OF A SCORED, FADED CONFEDERACY DECAL on the rear glass -- the attempt to remove it unsuccessful. The pickup aligns with Britta's PORSCHE CAYENNE, hospital parking decal visible.

Britta approaches the truck. Looks in.

BRITTA

I appreciate it.

Looking back is MIKAELA ROBINSON (17), who unlike her mother and grandmother, has cinnamon skin, hair a weeping willow of dark brown and the complexion of a creamy, artisanal balm. Her amber eyes inspect us. Britta admires the truck.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

You know what this pickup is called, right?

Mikaela keeps on inspecting, looking for the good in us.

MIKAELA

The Red Sea, perhaps?

BRITTA

(nodding)
It belonged to Moses.
(MORE)

BRITTA (CONT'D)

You've heard of Karl, but this was owned by Moses Malone, another Hall of Famer.

(patting truck hood)

He auctioned it off to the highest jumper on the team when he came to Philly.

Mikaela tries to endure once again as Britta gets high on her heritage...

BRITTA (CONT'D)

Everyone who tried busted a shin, a thigh, an ego. Except your Grandpa Bill, whose magic feet landed him on the other side of the cab.

...but Mikaela cannot, and so grows disinterested.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

He also won the pleasure of being Moses Malone's designated driver.

Britta notices, sours.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

Since you already won the fucking truck -- you don't need to jump anymore. Just practice technique. I'm going to a meeting.

MIKAELA

Grief or liver support?

BRITTA

Same thing right now.

MIKAELA

If she dies, I'll wrap her in her Klan robe before I leave.

Britta steps away.

BRITTA

It's a vestment. Take the key out.

Mikaela won't.

MIKAELA

Then what's "nigger?"

Britta pauses, shuts her eyes.

MIKAELA (CONT'D)
 (shutting off the truck)
 I heard it. Chuck heard it.

Mikaela steps out of the truck. 6'1. Looming behind Britta.
 At least ten inches separate them.

She looks up at the regulation hoop in the driveway. Her legs
 -- space elevators with quad sweeps -- flex as she jumps.

Britta cranes up to watch both of Mikaela's hands grip the
 hoop with ease. As she hangs on the rim, deltoids stocked for
 world-class kills stretch her GAINESVILLE HIGH LONG SLEEVE.

She lands. Peeks way, way down at Britta, who turns away.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dimly lit by stove light. Mikaela hunched across a counter,
 texting a flurry on her phone.

Britta enters, hits a LIGHT. Mikaela squints as Britta
 gathers her keys.

BRITTA
 I'll be an hour. We've got Hot
 Pockets and half a bag of some
 stale, chili-flavored crisp
 bullshit that you forgot to clip.

Mikaela still texting.

MIKAELA
 Shame that they must be inedible
 now -- I haven't been here in four
 years.

Britta sniffs the air. Sneers.

BRITTA
 Why are you wearing perfume?

MIKAELA
 Frank got it for me.

BRITTA
 Which piece of shit is **he**?

MIKAELA
 Nah. Frank worships me.

MIKAELA (CONT'D)
 Worship is good for IG.

BRITTA

College is on your CV. Wait until you're in before you get tangled up in the likes of worship again.

MIKAELA

(sarcastic)

I got into Amherst and Duke and twenty other institutions , but I keep *fucking* forgetting that UF is the only school for my kind. *Oh, bother.*

BRITTA

Our kind.

MIKAELA

His kind.

(beat)

Mercy me --I do hope that maybe they'll offer me after the game!

BRITTA

Maybe being the operative.

MIKAELA

Ever read *The Castle* by Kafka?

BRITTA

If you work those digs, actually execute coach's gameplan.

MIKAELA

I got into *The Castle* too.

BRITTA

Maybe *maybe.*

MIKAELA

Nobody gets into *The Castle.*

BRITTA

But if all you do is keep killing the ball, well that's a highlight reel, Franz. Not a scholarship. Not a career.

MIKAELA

You worshipped Chuck.

BRITTA

It was the thing to do for girls who didn't have your chances at your age.

She opens the refrigerator.

MIKAELA
Medical school, Dr. Moran?

BRITTA
I didn't find science until long after the worship was over, when I was *much* older than you. With your Dad I was seventeen, talent-less and *almost* atheist. But one day, he looked at me right. And I said "Well, shit, Brittany: if you're still gonna worship, let it be to a gorgeous ebony statue that brushes the sky."

Britta producing a blender pitcher filled with a thick green shake. Label reads "MIKAELA."

MIKAELA
Even as he cheated to your face.

Britta nods as she pours a glass.

BRITTA
You worship when you're afraid, right?

Hands it to Mikaela.

MIKAELA
You're coming to the game?

BRITTA
(without looking up)
What if she passes?

MIKAELA
What if I do?

Britta slurps from the pitcher.

BRITTA
Well...

Green protein mustache.

BRITTA (CONT'D)
Then your reputation for drama will live on.

Mikaela hunches in pain --

BRITTA (CONT'D)

Come on. Of course I'll be there.

-- as she shifts her gaze to the patio door and SPRINGS BACKWARDS WHILE MUFFLING A PIERCING SHRIEK.

MIKAELA'S POV:

It's VIV, illuminated by a patio light, wearing ear-over headphones and aided by a walker as her wasting state woefully inches around the small pool at a dwindling clip.

Mikaela's glass BURSTS ON THE FLOOR. Britta about-faces to what Mikaela sees:

Viv steadies herself, jettisons the walker, accelerates, atrophied legs churning as she becomes upright, strong, athletic.

She WHISTLES an upbeat tune as she moves faster, and we see a SPECTRAL FIGURE of a woman - flowing ombre hair, cowboy hat, sexy black romper brown-fringed boots - separating from Viv as a lower-density constituent separates within a centrifuge.

She rounds back toward the home. Looks up to notice Britta and Mikaela staring, causing her to stumble over the patio concrete. Her headphones hit the ground.

Viv seizes a fistful of the pool gate mesh to support herself, once again sick. She scans the black, unfenced yards surrounding her. Gapes at something that catches her eye.

VIV POV:

We see the spectral woman from behind, faintly lit by the light from our own yard, walking purposefully into the distance, until she's captured and obscured by the night.

Viv is tugged by Britta's chaperoning arm. Still, she watches the dark, yearning from within her disease.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mikaela stands over Viv, watching her fight to stay asleep. Britta dumping a syringe and vial of HALOPERIDOL into a biohazard refuse bin.

MIKAELA

Doc. What the fuck was that?

BRITTA

It means that the Decadron isn't keeping the swelling down.

(MORE)

BRITTA (CONT'D)

So the cancer's playing Simon Says on her brain. And when the brain tries to fight back, you get weird, temporary shit that looks like fucked-up hope. It ain't.

(at room threshold)

Can't mind that. Re-watch your East Ridge game like a normal five-star recruit. Cause if you don't learn to shovel your hands you'll be fucked! That's a positive if you look at it the right way.

Mikaela twiddles Viv's gown sleeve as she glares at Britta.

MIKAELA

Am I supposed to just watch this too?

BRITTA

Just make her comfortable.

MIKAELA

Comfortable.

BRITTA

She may wake and ask for something.

MIKAELA

Maybe a cigarette?

BRITTA

Don't fuck with me.

Britta departs. Mikaela shouts after.

MIKAELA

When's Simon gonna say "Die?"

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Hardwood floors and servers for this variegated crowd. A three-piece blues ensemble jam out like they'd pay to do it.

Drinks for Britta and stocky LAMAR HOWELL (40s), warm perhaps because he's recently left Hell, staked at a back corner by the CD jukebox. Britta faces the stage. Eyes glazed.

HOWELL

Small cell lung cancer, what -- a year-and-a-half ago?

Britta nods.

HOWELL (CONT'D)

That's one of the worst.

BRITTA

Only ninjas are faster. Six months ago, she was receiving chemo at Shands, and suddenly shouted out from a gaze beyond that of even an absolute stranger:

(imitating)

"I don't have cancer, you cunts!
What the fuck am I doing here?"
Then she ripped out her line,
sprayed doxatacel everywhere.
That's how we knew it had spread.

HOWELL

And that's what the MRI showed.

BRITTA

I didn't order one.

(shrugs, sips)

Just to show certain death
somewhere else? Why? I brought her
home, so at least she could be
around Dad.

HOWELL

You're allowed to give her chemo?

Britta nods.

BRITTA

I've been blocking everything out.
Perhaps as I must: as an
anesthesiologist it's my job to
administer -- to make the mind go
away for an allotted period of
time.

HOWELL

You block out pain.

BRITTA

(sipping drink)

Unfortunately I also self-
administer.

Howell quaffs his drink.

HOWELL

How old were you when the Tower
died? Three?

BRITTA

Six.

HOWELL

Still too early for the death trap.
When people talk about them, they
usually aren't talking about the
survivors.

HOWELL (CONT'D)

Dr. Moran or Britta? Short for
Brittany?

Britta shrugs -- whichever.

HOWELL (CONT'D)

You and your daughter are about to
be trapped very, **very** slowly. In
fact it takes forever. But you can
survive.

Britta attracted to more than rhetoric. He should hint that
he is, too.

HOWELL (CONT'D)

It's as important that you're there
for her as it is that she's there
for you, so that you don't both
fall away as you change. That's the
death trap rule. To survive death,
you've got to change. Mutate.

Britta sips away the idea.

HOWELL (CONT'D)

Science knows grief the way I know
science.

Stares Howell cleanly in the eyes. She's plastered.

BRITTA

I hate that I have to ask, but what
qualifies **you** to run the group?

HOWELL

Ha! You're the only people I have
left!

Britta wants more.

HOWELL (CONT'D)

My parents died when I was eight.
My sister when I was eighteen.

(MORE)

HOWELL (CONT'D)

I sped it along by enlisting for
Desert Storm. Then my son to cancer
at 35. And my wife to my son at 36.

BRITTA

Christ...

HOWELL

Grief is never about coming to
terms with one person.

A live SONG comes on: "I Don't Believe in The Sun" by The
Magnetic Fields, being covered by a woman's angelic,
delightful mezzo. Howell looks at his watch, stands.

HOWELL (CONT'D)

Shift starts at four...

She hurries him down for a hug.

BRITTA

COME ON COME ON COME ON!

He leans into it, causing him to kiss her hair. The whole
thing is ungainly, but Britta's drunk, oblivious and
completely amenable. He pulls away.

HOWELL

Uhh...

(beat)

Good -- auf wiedersehen.

He waves, exits as Britta inhales his remaining splash of
bourbon. She sits and stares at the ground for a second,
listening to the beautiful music. She flags down the server.

BRITTA

I'm ready to pay.

SERVER

The guy paid.

BRITTA

Hmmm.

(getting up)

That was nice.

She stands, hanging onto her insides as she stumbles away.
The server gives her a disapproving look. Britta passes the
stage, glimpses the singer:

IT'S VIV, a canon of beauty, dressed as and embodying the
phantom we saw break from Viv at the pool as she paced it.
Even has the hair. No signs of disease.

Britta continues like nothing's happened, clinging to the stage edge to steady herself to the exit.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Britta bursts from the din into the parking lot, sidling in a sick hurry toward her Porsche. As she moves, she sees BILL'S TRUCK parked in the periphery. She blinkers her seeing eye with a hand. Gasping for air.

BRITTA
Grief is a gaslight.

She retches, wills her vomit back down.

BRITTA (CONT'D)
So is your drinking problem.

EXT. BRITTA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Massive contemporary two-story. Britta's Porsche parked halfway inside one of three single-car garages. Vomit on the cobblestone beside the wide-open driver-side door.

INT. MIKAELA'S ROOM - NIGHT

We see a framed PHOTO on a dresser of Mikaela with Misty May-Treanor and Kerri Walsh, propped among countless tournament medals and SCHOLARSHIP LETTERS. There's a Skype laptop setup with a kino light for webinars, FLORIDA GATORS volleyball in an office chair.

A senior PORTRAIT: Mikaela holding a duck with human duckface lips photoshopped onto it, duck bill photoshopped onto her.

We hear a bottle-filled trash bag being dragged closer to us.

Britta stumbles in, trash bag lagging behind. She opens a drawer in Mikaela's desk, gathering from it several single-serving vodka and rum bottles. She piles them into the bag, piling onto what we now see are dozens of LIQUOR HANDLES emptied to various levels.

Britta notices something tucked into a corner of the desk: a TRIPTYCH FRAME featuring L: young Britta and Viv, waving; M: Britta and young Mikaela, waving R: Viv and young Mikaela, only Viv waving. CLOSE on the left PHOTO.

INT. O'CONNELL CENTER - FLASHBACK - DAY

Young Britta's POV for a split-second, grasping her father's jersey from atop his shoulders in the stratosphere, taking in the ant-like projections in the stands after a Gator game.

A vague figure in the front row might be YOUNG VIV, waving up at us.

BACK TO:

INT. MIKAELA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Britta SMASHES THE FRAME, REMOVES THE PHOTO OF HER AND VIV. Revealing ANOTHER PHOTO hidden behind:

A black-and-white professional shot of an early-teenaged, PREGNANT MIKAELA with garland in her hair, the hands of an older male teenager clasping her belly from behind.

Britta suffers the diversion for a moment, then gently sets the frame face-down. She sets the photo of her with Viv on the desk, hurries from the room.

We hear her cell RING. She returns, prescription pad: "BRITTA MORAN, MD" in hand. She shuts her eyes to stop the room from spinning, takes a deep breath. Answers the phone.

BRITTA

This is Dr. Moran.

Britta writes a script, intermittently looks at Viv's photo.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

When did you give Mr. Benford his last dose of morphine? Give him one more, then start him on a patch. The 75. Ok, thanks.

She hangs up. Reveal prescription: "ZOLOFT 50 MG, Britta Moran." She tears and pockets it, lies on Mikaela's bed.

EXT. MORAN RESIDENCE - 5 AM

The first bit of sun inks the sky. Britta's Porsche idles into the driveway behind Bill's truck.

INT. FRONT ROOM - 5 AM

Mikaela asleep on a couch. The laptop beside her loops footage from one of her volleyball games. The door opens. Britta, still drunk, tiptoes clumsily past her daughter.

INT. HALLWAY - 5 AM

Britta sneaks past the closed door of the master bedroom. Seizes the doorknob behind. Pauses. Twists half-way. Stops.

INT. BRITTA CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - 5 AM

Britta sinks onto her stripped childhood bed. The walls are filled with vintage UF basketball memorabilia. Close on a picture of plain YOUNG BRITTA (19) in her UF WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM PHOTO-- the shortest and least charmed of the girls.

INT. BRITTA'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - 9 AM

Britta dead weight on the bed. The rasp of a middle-aged woman outside the door claws her from her slumber.

DOLORES (O.S.)
Doctor Moran?

A knock. Silence. Several knocks. Britta stirs.

DOLORES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Doctor Moran?

BRITTA
(wincing, faux cheerful)
Come in, Dolores!

As she wipes her face she's JOLTED by something recalled.

BRITTA (CONT'D)
Shit.

Dolores (32)- dense in mind and body - barges in, sporting a DIGNAS PALLIATIVE CARE purple polo shirt, a box of Marlboros in the shirt pocket.

BRITTA (CONT'D)
What time did my daughter leave,
Dolores?

Britta types out a blue iMessage to MIKAELA: "Good Luck, Pebbles Junior." The iMessage never sends, turning green. *Blocked?*

DOLORES

Dunno. She was gone before I got here at six.

Britta shuts her eyes.

BRITTA

Thanks for coming today.

DOLORES

She's doing real well today, but she has a question.

(stretching)

Questions are good, right?

Britta rolls over, makes bloodshot eye contact with Dolores. *Nothing is good.*

BRITTA

For the purposes of ending this conversation? Yes.

Dolores nods, grins.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

ALL MY CHILDREN plays on Dolores' TV, which is wedged into a corner beside a foldout chair. Viv propped up in bed: bony and colorless, staring into the trash at tissues stained with mucous and blood. Unnatural hues. She speaks to herself.

VIV

This wasn't what Darwin was about, folks sticking around long enough to develop thick oozes like mine.

She gazes at a syringe driver poking out of Dolores' backpack. Britta enters. Spies her mother, the raw protuberance of her chemo port. Viv stays on the syringe driver as Britta covers her foot with the comforter.

VIV (CONT'D)

I was a shitty mother.

The mention blasts Britta motionless. She wriggles, slowly making her way toward a proper reply.

BRITTA

Mama, it's -- you had a legend
pulled out from under you at a
young age. Don't you think about
anything but that you raised me.

Viv with a wet coughing fit. Shaking her head.

VIV

Ramen and cold-cut Thanksgivings...

BRITTA

So what. The league spat him out
like foul dip before he knew he was
being chewed. It wasn't his fault
he didn't know how to handle money.
Way you said he was spoiled growing
up -- it probably barely knew him!

VIV

Your daughter's wonderful. I wish
I'd given her a chance.

Britta quick picking up trash. A little ashamed.

BRITTA

You know -- her skin is lighter
than it appears.

Viv nods approvingly.

VIV

Is there any way that my near-
inanimate ass can be at her game?

Britta in shock.

VIV (CONT'D)

Don't worry about it.
(patting lap)
Come here.

Britta sits on her lap. Viv grips Britta's hand. Britta pulls
away from its ice, re-grips.

VIV (CONT'D)

(getting wheezy)
I thought about the time you turned
three at a 76ers game.
(MORE)

VIV (CONT'D)

The thousands in the audience he
led in serenading you with "Happy
Birthday." And the millions through
the TV wishing you one, and the
billions who would've if they'd
known.

Britta leans down, turns up Viv's oxygen. The wheezing
improves but now Viv chokes -- indignation from a memory.

VIV (CONT'D)

And the trillions across space and
time who should've!!

Viv turns, eyes Britta with motherly pride, raises her open
hand above Britta's head as if to measure her height.

VIV (CONT'D)

Who knows how tall you'll be when
you leave his shadow?

Britta's eyes lead Viv to the picture of Bill on the wall.
Viv shakes her head, soothes Britta by caressing her hand.

VIV (CONT'D)

No. 6'11 will be the height of an
ant at your foot.

Viv strokes Britta's tired cheek. Both sets of eyes shut.

VIV (CONT'D)

Be elsewhere for a spell.

Senses Britta settling, easing in her lap.

VIV (CONT'D)

Atta girl.

Viv starts a stanza to Elton John's "Someone Save My Life
Tonight," but with her cancer she sounds like an underoiled
wheat thresher. Viv stops. Starts. Groans. Tries before-

BRITTA

I'll do it, Mama.

(beaming, back in time)

And someone saved my life tonight
sugar bear/you almost had your
hooks in me didn't you dear/

INT. BEDROOM - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Young Viv gently scoops up a sleeping five year-old Britta off this same bed 34 years ago. Very little is different now from then, except Bill SNORES on one side. Viv carries little Britta into her own bedroom, singing MOS the same lullaby, which is filled in here by adult Britta's song.

BRITTA (V.O.)
 You nearly had me roped and tied/
 Altar-bound, hypnotized/sweet
 freedom whispered in my ear/

EXT. MORAN RESIDENCE - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

BABY MIKAELA being held at the front door by Britta (22), wearing a University of Florida medical school white coat. Britta offers her to Viv, who telegraphs disgust as she looks at the child. Britta crestfallen, retracts Mikaela into her own arms. She walks away, whispering something to the baby nestled close. Possibly the same song...

BRITTA (V.O.)
 You're a butterfly/and butterflies
 are free to fly/fly away, high
 away, bye bye...

...as they move toward a waiting HONDA ACCORD, Charles behind the wheel. Viv scowling them off as she slams the door shut.

INT. BEDROOM - PRESENT DAY

Britta finished the song -- it has caved them both into tears, clutching one-another at the hand. Viv's nose trickles brown-carmine sludge.

Viv's eyes open as she notices, LAUGHS. Britta's eyes pop open, immediately plays doctor and wipes it away.

VIV
 Who *wouldn't* be crying if they
 leaked this red shit all the time?

Britta follows with her own laugh -- learning that laughter is the point of death if you're not dead. It yields more laughing, amplifying contagiously between them until Britta is WHEEZING with the stuff.

VIV (CONT'D)
 (re: wheezing)
 Oh...now you're copying me!

Britta wheezes "YES." They carry on.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

Banner over the massive, slow-to-funnel crowd: 5A Volleyball Semi-Finals GAINESVILLE HIGH VS. FOREST HILL

INT. GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

A crowd settles into the bleachers: GAINESVILLE BLUE heathered with specks of FOREST HILL ORANGE. Volleyball net splits the floor. Looming over everything is a 20-foot mural extracted from an old press photo: a thundering DUNK by a 17 year-old BILL MORAN.

A SPIRITED NEW SIGN bursts with red-light life:

"BILL MORAN ARENA"

Reveal BRITTA wheeling VIV -- wearing a BLACK BOB-CUT WIG, oxygen tank beneath and a surgical mask over mouth -- into the front row of three that are cordoned-off for other boosters. An older scoreboard fizzles beneath the new sign:

GAINESVILLE HURRICANES V. FOREST HILL FALCONS.

FIVE CLOTH CHAMPIONSHIP MEN'S BASKETBALL BANNERS HANG:

1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, **1996**

CLOSE ON -

The sooty brilliance of a **1996** BASKETBALL STATE CHAMPION RING around a sinuous black finger, its diamond chips disappearing as the hand dives into a pocket.

Hiding the finger as he regards the latest banner is CHARLES ROBINSON (40s), another tower at 6'10, standing alone along a wall. Sports jacket, dreads to his waist.

Watching Mikaela - hair braided, headband reading "UNRETURNABLE" -- lead the team from the locker to the volleyball court, spurring a VICIOUS STANDING OVATION.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen, your LADY
EAGLES!

Mikaela makes incidental eye contact with Charles, who then he can't watch at all. Mikaela catches a ball, begins warm-ups. Her limbs dwarf those of her teammates, making them appear like filaments.

VIV'S POV:

Charles turns to his supply of curious onlookers in the stands, indulges a few of the stares with waves and shy smiles.

An AUTOGRAPH SEEKER (5) and his mother, both in Florida Gators basketball jerseys, approach. Charles signs their old FLORIDA GATORS program: CHARLES DUNKING ON THE COVER. He gives the ecstatic boy a pound. The mother chats with Charles, and midway through hands Charles \$20, which he pockets without a hitch in their talk.

The little boy looks up, awestruck.

BOY

Why are you here, Mr. Robinson?

CHARLES

(smiling, gesturing to court)

Number 23 --

The boy turns around and sees Mikaela demolishing fools.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

-- that's my daughter.

The boy's eyes get bigger than those reserved for Charles.

BOY

May I get *her* autograph too?

Charles beams at the boy and his mother.

Viv's eyes -- all we see above the mask -- stare Lectorian daggers at Charles. Britta follows with a glance, then immediately submits head-down into her iPhone. CLOSE on the text box to Mikaela from before, her message still not replied to.

Viv watches Mikaela oscillate on a different plane of skill than the rest: spikes that start a foot higher in the air pulverize as they smack the court. As the headband said: "Unreturnable."

The opposing team stall, also distracted. They watch Mikaela's strafe like an invasion in the night. SMACK SMACK SMACK Viv glows watching.

Britta leans in to her. Unimpressed.

BRITTA

UF has one scholarship left.

Viv's eyes completely upswept in her granddaughter.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

Mikaela plays the same position as the number one girl in the country, who wants to start as a freshman. She won't compete.

Mikaela and her teammates, JOCELYN and ANDY, exchange the ball in dig drills.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

Mikaela has to play so well tonight that UF would be okay with losing the top recruit in the last ten years just to sign Mikaela.

VIV

Of course she'll get it.

Britta scoffs.

BRITTA

Mikaela is rated number 34 in the country.

VIV

But whose blood does that girl have? Not ours.

Britta grips Viv's hand, rubs it tenderly.

BRITTA

Mama there's other blood out there besides Daddy's.

UF VOLLEYBALL SCOUTS LYNN AND FREEMAN, in UF POLOS, settle into open bleacher spots. A man in a GAINESVILLE POLO -- ATHLETIC DIRECTOR FLETCHER -- shakes hands with them.

Britta catches what's next along the corner of her eye. The agitated gazes of Mikaela and her mates follow.

Trailing closely behind the coaches, wearing a STRANAHAN HIGH SCHOOL jumper and a UF lanyard, is the towering, pro-ready leviathan of high school volleyball: DENARIA CAPELTON (17), easily 6'4.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

There's the other blood. Denaria Capelton.

Viv sneers at the girl.

Mikaela and her team notice too. Charles exchanges a brief, fearful glance with Britta.

Andy and Jocelyn join the gawking as their practice volleys reduce to rote motions. Andy whispers to Mikaela, who steps away, turns to consider a BASKETBALL HOOP along the volleyball court edge.

Without shifting her gaze, she reaches her hand out to Jocelyn, calls for a ball. Jocelyn lobs it to her.

Mikaela catches it, turns to the bleachers. Mikaela and Denaria regard each other. Neither girl's gaze flinching.

MIKAELA

Hmmm.

Mikaela takes off toward the basket.

JOCELYN

Go pogo on her ass Mikaela!!!

Britta taps Viv.

BRITTA

Look, Ma.

Viv looks on. Mikaela dribbles onto the hoop. The crowd catches notice, luring the UF scouts out of their notes. Mikaela leaves the ground.

CLOSE ON VIV LOST IN WONDER as Mikaela's TOMAHAWK DUNK climbs high above the rim and STABS THE BALL THROUGH. The crowd roars for Mikaela's coronation.

MATCH TO BILL MORAN DOING THE SAME THING IN ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE

OLD ANNOUNCER (FLASHBACK) (O.S.)

And it's young BILL MORAN WITH
ANOTHER DUNK!

Viv delights in the memory, its alignment with now. Denaria stone-faced. Mikaela alights fluidly, backpedals right into a mob of teammates. She beats her chest with both hands, in rhythm with her tidal ovation, beckons the world to "bring it" with the same hands.

BRITTA

Pompous ass.

The UF scouts casually take more notes, offer slight but valuable approving nods to Mikaela. JOCELYN gives her a pound. Denaria watches, frozen in a smirk. Mikaela dominates her with a glare.

MIKAELA

I'ma fuck her with a strap-on
called "The Friend Zone."

They teammates who hear cover their mouths at the burn.
Britta claps out of decorum. Charles high-fiving the crowd.
Resolutely in his daughter's corner. Viv smug behind mask.

VIV

That other girl doesn't do that.

BRITTA

No. The other girl uses both hands.

Viv tries to stand up from the wheelchair to clap, but
decrepitude shoves back her down. Takes Britta's hand. Britta
musters a half-smile as she's rinsed in a chant of--

CROWD

Let's go Mikaela! Let's go Mikaela!

-- as Mikaela basks in it.

INT. VOLLEYBALL ARENA - LATER

SCOREBOARD: GAINESVILLE 16 FOREST HILL 14

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Mikaela Robinson with the serve.
Nine kills on the night already.

Mikaela warming up.

Viv and Britta in healthful bliss watching. UF scouts
continue to scribble in their notebook as Denaria grooves
beneath her headphones. A SHITTY ASSHOLE in Forest Hill
Orange (20s, lanky, destined for great things) barks from the
stands before Mikaela can serve.

SHITTY ASSHOLE

Mikaela!!!! The ball ain't the only
thing you killed!

This silences the arena. Charles glares in the direction of
the heckler. Mikaela nods it away. Prepares to serve.

SHITTY ASSHOLE (CONT'D)

Got the latex allergy like her
Mama!!!

Denaria removes her headphones at the development. Mikaela's
shuddering body no longer facing the match.

SHITTY ASSHOLE (CONT'D)
 Least *Mama* kept hers though, right?

Gainesville fans exchange sympathy and shock. The rest of the red-state-centric crowds drones and scowls in low, repudiating chatter. Mikaela's arm lowers. She drops the ball, which dribbles into the stands. Her broken head swivels into Britta, who despite being blanched by disbelief -

Scolds.

BRITTA
 Don't you dare worry about that!

Mikaela crouches to the floor as coach and teammates attend to her. The scouts exchange looks, unsure. Denaria deadpan. It's terrifying how silent the crowd is as the heckler gets uglier, repeating -

SHITTY ASSHOLE (O.S.)
 BABY-KILLER CLAP CLAP CLAP-CLAP-
 CLAP!

-- until physically silenced by fans. As Viv hears, her eyes fixate on the mural of Bill above, like he's dangling a lantern toward her in the dark.

Charles glares at Britta -- who continues to do nothing -- before he STORMS THE BLEACHERS. Despite an attempt at peacemaking by several crowd members, Charles breaches the officials, DRAGS THE HECKLER TO THE GROUND BY HIS HAIR.

Viv continues to spy Bill above. A grin forms. Britta stares into the floor.

VIV
 I'm so lucky to be able to miss
 you, Bill. It's raining down here.

As Viv infuses his image with her fondest memories, she coughs violently. A scarlet bloom on the inside of her mask. Her eyes roll back as she collapses. And seizes.

CLOSE on BRITTA, gaping at her fallen mother. She looks up--

BRITTA'S POV

Mikaela waiting among teammates to be comforted by her mom. Too late: she's swept to her feet by the arm of Charles, dragging her into loving embrace. Police officers rush past toward the melee as father and daughter are torn apart together, Charles doing his damndest to be two people.

DISSOLVE TO:

An ambulance racing through rain and traffic. DR. KELLER (40s), a neurologist fighting to finish his shift, speaks to a flighty, unhinged Britta in a worn Irish brogue.

BRITTA (O.S.)
They're notoriously unreliable for--

DR. KELLER (O.S.)
Dr. Shah is your mother's
physician.

BRITTA (O.S.)
Then I appreciate your outside
help. If the fMRI lights up
normally, then she may have nothing
or may be remitting! And nothing
uses more of the brain than a song -
- right, Keller?

The strident, vexed voice of DR. SHAH (60s), Viv's oncologist, pipes in.

DR. SHAH (O.S.)
Not the songs of denial, Dr. Moran.

BRITTA (O.S.)
She was singing this morning, you
scum.

An fMRI scan for V. SMITH: a real-time display of a brain through a thermal map. It pulses and spreads color based on activity, lighting up to show which parts Viv is using at any given point in time. Right now, it's grey.

We hear the disgusting BRRING of a very sick Viv trying to sing a note from within flesh that won't have it. As she croaks, we focus on the first MOVING IMAGE of her brain, showing faint, diffuse splotches of yellow and orange.

VIV (O.S.)
God...bliss...amer-hhhuhh.

CLOSE on the scan, as the brain activity wanes. Viv's voice drops to a gurgle of shapeless, meaningless static. A lull...

DR. SHAH (O.S.)
(restrained)
Your mother, already falling off of
the cliff of life, must now also
provide the soundtrack.

STAYING WITH THE FEEBLE ACTIVITY as we isolate on Viv...

VIV (O.S.)
...to the oceans white with f-f-...

...as activity diminishes.

DR. SHAH
 Compassion for your mother, Dr.
 Moran. Please.

BRITTA
 (beat)
 Take her out.

The mandate initiates new life into Viv; mid-lyric her voice becomes mellifluous and hale. It's the voice of the chanteuse that Britta heard singing "I Don't Believe In The Sun."

She resurrects GOD BLESS AMERICA with her booming, voluptuous pipes as we watch the fMRI bombard with intense, focal activity in completely different areas of the brain. Dancing to the voice of its maker.

VIV (O.S.)
*...foam/God bless America, my home
 sweet home/From the mountains to
 the prairies/To the oceans white
 with foam/God bless America, my
 home sweet home/GOD BLESS AMERICA,
 MY HOME SWEET HOOOOOMMMMMEEEEEE!*

INT. FMRI ROOM - NIGHT

A wretched, overtired Britta waits beside Dr. Keller (40s, athletic) in front of the imaging room door. It opens.

Viv emerges in holy refulgence: bald, in a hospital gown, but standing as Britta glimpsed her at the nightclub -- completely upright and healthy. Britta and Viv lock eyes as mom closes in, two inches taller than Britta.

CLOSE ON BRITTA EYEING VIV UP AND DOWN, contending with profound, indiscriminating disbelief: in the spontaneously extant mother before her, in her life, in the cosmos.

INT. HOSPITAL OFFICE WING - NIGHT

TWELVE DOCTORS ARGUING OUTSIDE OF AN OFFICE, jockeying to be correct about whatever is on the pages in their hands.

Glimpses of V. MORAN'S LAB REPORTS AND SCANS as the pages are shuffled and scrutinized.

Close on Viv's FMRI SLIDES, illuminated by the ceiling light.

Held and studied by DR. RAVINDER SHAH (clean shaven, UF tie, lab coat reads ONCOLOGY) -- an ambulatory stalk of sadness, whose soft face is just one more service to patients looking for reassurance. And when they're not looking, he becomes diagnosed with a piece of every cancer he's ever seen. We recognize his voice from the fMRI voiceover.

DR. SHAH

Look at that amygdala light up like
a quasar.

He's comparing two images: one with a mostly unlit area, the other that illuminates the same region.

DR. SHAH (CONT'D)

I told her that her mother was
going to die. And then she walked
out healthier than I've ever been.

He's stares at the images until he sees nothing. Sets them down and surveys the other doctors. Focuses on one group. Smiles.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE on Britta -- in a lab coat like she's on rounds -- studying Viv in the hospital bed, awaiting discharge. Britta shuts her eyes, breathes deeply. A POLICE OFFICER regards Britta from the doorway with great caution.

POLICE OFFICER

Sure you're finally good, ma'am?

Britt nods repeatedly. The cop hesitates, exits with a wave.

BRITTA

Okay, Miss--

VIV

Technically I never divorced your
father...

Britta shrugs off the insane babble, looks down at what she holds: TWO SETS OF BLOODWORK FOR V. MORAN.

The first CBC is a mess: most lab values are morbidly out-of-range, pocked with Hs or Ls for high and low. Literal death. She flips to an image showing VERY VISIBLE LUNG METASTASES.

BRITTA

These are the results of my mother,
Vivian Moran, from a week ago.
Lungs pocked with tumors. One-to-
six week prognosis. Hemoptysis.
That means coughing blood.

Britta indicates the second set.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

These are the test results for *you*,
also named Vivian Moran, from an
hour ago.

She studies them: not one value out-of-range. Literal life.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

Clear lungs. No cough. Thirty-to-
fifty-year prognosis. You are
healthy. This is not the place for
you. Therefore you are mistaken.

VIV

You don't remember me waving to you
at the nightclub last night?

BRITTA

(re-reading labs)
I was very drunk last night.

VIV

I know.

Britta flips to the new images. COMPLETELY CLEAR.

BRITTA

(sighing)
I've been permitted to examine you,
to set your mind at ease that you
are not my mother, but in fact
someone else. If you persist,
you'll be sent to psych for
evaluation.

Britta approaches, brushes her hand over Viv's smoother skin,
still bearing the splotches of her past treatments. But the
skin has regained elasticity, breath. Britta presses a finger
onto the RAW CHEMO PORT. Viv winces.

Britta un-pockets an otoscope, looks up Viv's nostril,
revealing some of the CAKED BLOOD from her earlier bleeding.
She pockets it. Looks at her PERFECT VITALS on the monitor.
110/60, 64 BPM.

Pulls a wad of paper towels from a dispenser, folds them into a square. Holds them close to Viv's mouth.

BRITTA (CONT'D)
Cough, please.

Viv hacks into the towel. Britta inspects the SPUTUM: clear.

VIV
Britta.

Britta folds a fresh piece of towel. Offers it.

BRITTA
Cough, please.

Viv repeats. Britta checks the towel. The same.

VIV
Pebbles.

Britta shudders, pushes another piece of towel toward Viv.

BRITTA
Cough, please.

Viv overcompensates with a HACK. Britta inspects the aftermath. Clear. A tear pools in the corner of her eye.

VIV
Pebbles Moran!

Britta moves away. Offers another napkin from afar.

BRITTA
Cough, please.

Viv cranes to take it. Coughs. This time Britta doesn't even look. Viv sets the napkin on the bed.

BRITTA (CONT'D)
Cough, please.

Viv pokes her daughter's hand with a finger. The touch drives Britta to the bed edge. She sits. She offers one more piece of napkin, this time in a panic.

BRITTA (CONT'D)
(panicked)
Cough, please.

VIV
No.

Britta summons courage: faces her mother, stares into the opposite of certain death she's been rehearsing for months. Locking into the giveaway: the tell-tale eyes that have always been her mother's.

BRITTA'S POV

CLOSE ON THOSE EYES, boring into us.

BRITTA (O.S.)
Cough, please.

Eyes that quiver and twinkle during the cough.

INT. HOSPITAL OFFICE WING - NIGHT

Shah's gaze wends across the doctors, which as they indicate statistics on sheets, shades on slides, make clear that they are *terrified*.

DR. SHAH
Greg.

Dr. Keller also closely watching the phenomenon.

DR. KELLER
Yes, Ravinder.

DR. SHAH
If you were one of Lazarus' sisters, and he came back to you, would you spend your remaining time enjoying him, or studying miracles?

DR. KELLER
Dr. Moran resigned.

DR. SHAH
Good for her.

Dr. Shah immediately recognizes three doctors that have broken from the group, and seem to be consolidating their terror in prayer.

Shah indicates the three. Keller focuses on them.

DR. SHAH (CONT'D)
Drs. Fujiwa, Schwartz, and Hijazi. Johns Hopkins, Duke, McGill. Men of evidence with over two-hundred publications between them...

CLOSE on the babble evolved from PRAYERS in Japanese, Hebrew and Farsi.

DR. SHAH (CONT'D)
 Now running to the religions they
 grew up with, all because Dr.
 Moran's mother got better.

CLOSER ON NO BABBLE AT ALL: at this distance we only hear the fear behind the Japanese, Hebrew and Farsi. Shah unflinching in his awe.

DR. SHAH (CONT'D)
 As remission is a synonym for
 torture in my field, pursuing it
 becomes a kind of rapture.
 (nodding)
 And one day, Keller, in the
 chronicles of Remission: this woman
 will be regarded as either an
 exponent of God, or as the
 annihilation of meaning.

Shah wedges a cigarette in his lips. Lights up, takes as he regards this born-again triad. After he takes another long drag, he raises the cigarette like he's toasting with it.

DR. SHAH (CONT'D)
 To being okay with God.

Shah reinserts his cigarette. Inhales. Garbles the phrase.

DR. SHAH (CONT'D)
 To Him being okay with me.

He approaches the group, wraps commiserating arms around them, layering the cacophony with HIS OWN PRAYER IN PUNJABI. Puffing between tracts of what he adds of his faith.

INT. HOSPITAL MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

Modest. Young professionals in varying modes of anxiety-doctors, nurses, techs, patients - occupy foldout chairs.

Standing center crowd is Howell. Here he's sharp, and the attention he draws effortless as he listens to TIM (30s) disintegrated by sarcastic rage.

TIM
 She didn't meditate, juice. I
 didn't ask her to get a pet.
 (MORE)

TIM (CONT'D)

No Reiki, no support groups, no ropes courses with other people who also "weren't ropes course people." No shiitake enemas, no discount seances next to the laundromat, no snorting lines of granulated kale like Scarface on Earth Day, no signing ten people up for a gallon of resveratrol...

Britta skulks in behind in street clothes. The floor creaks. Howell hears, waves her in without looking.

TIM (CONT'D)

No inspirational quotes on toilet paper, no cross-country self-discovery in a minivan accompanied by a penguin-turned-priest. All she wanted was God and the chemo.

Britta exchanges familiar nods and smiles with the others as she takes a seat..

HOWELL

Tim...

Britta looks through the door window: VIV waiting, loitering, fidgeting.

TIM

Can't tolerate a figment whose first thing "He" gives to a woman who never had nothing is three stillbirths, then rots away a uterus that didn't work, then blesses her with chemo that also don't work, then kills her on one of your beds here as her eyes, already blinded by chemo, open wider and afraider than those of a little girl who's drowning in the dark.

Surrounding folks groan at Tim's atheistic bent. Howell places a hand to Tim's shoulder, whispers to him.

TIM (CONT'D)

- say it out loud, goddamit! Don't you dare respect the boundaries of the world after what I told you!

Howell nods. Britta looks at two bewildered men who are nearly in tears over what Tim's said -they both grip a framed photo of an old woman who is in her Sunday best.

HOWELL

Some people need God to heal.
Others need him to be dead.

Howell writes something on a paper scrap from his pocket.

HOWELL (CONT'D)

How you feel without God: that
that's how they feel *with* Him. Your
question is their answer.

Britta spies Viv - growing impatient outside, shrugging "WTF?" to her daughter. Britta turns away -- *she's dead*.

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

If your aunt picked God, Tim, allow
her. If you put God in a coffin,
allow yourself. You and your
version will get through this, I
promise.

Howell hands Tim the note, which he reads: "I'll help you bury Him if you want me to." Tim laughs. Howell looks around.

HOWELL (CONT'D)

Who would like to --

Viv repeatedly BLASTS the door with the knock of the gods. Blowing Britta off of her chair and onto her feet.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Britta stalls as she ponders the remnants of Hospice: bedpan, crowded pill tray, IV stand, vinyl gloves for handling chemo, biohazard waste basket, Dolores' unwelcome television-chair mock-up. Viv enters. Her gaze hangs on it, not understanding.

VIV

After a grueling day of being
repeatedly told I can't exist, I'm
off to bed.

BRITTA

Okay.

Viv settles onto the bed, draws the wadded sheets over her body, eyes shut. Britta looks on in fatigued afterglow.

VIV
Goodnight.

BRITTA
Indeed.

Viv falls asleep with a healthy, deep nasal cadence. Britta studies the Hospice materials, dims the lights, eases into Dolores' chair.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - LATER - DAWN

First light revealing Viv in blithe slumber. Britta locked onto her as she sips from a coffee pot.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - LATER - MORNING

We hear muffled NEWS RADIO coming from the kitchen. Britta has curled her way onto the bed, HOSPICE MISCELLANY SHOVED TO THE FLOOR. We hear closet RUMMAGING: hangers scraping a rack. Britta stirs, mutters pre-awakening stupidity.

BRITTA
Yes -- my mother's nurse. She doesn't know the difference between a PICC line and a port. Dolores Venables.

Her words wake her, and Britta emerges into reality, twisting toward the commotion as she stretches and groans. She perks as she inhales the aroma of FRESH COFFEE.

Britta's POV:

VIV, sipping coffee, considering a coat from an armoire. Scarfed and capped for a walk. Seeming to notice Britta's attention.

VIV
Fucking 33 outside...

The sleep seems to have restored credulity: seeing Viv alive and well can now be celebrated. Britta's shoulders relax. Her breathing begins to reassure her.

VIV (CONT'D)
But I'm a-walking.

Britta kindles a smile with a child's relish. It's true. They've both passed a test in the night.

EXT. WEALTHY NEIGHBORHOOD - MORNING

Savory dry cold. Gray skies over conifers, chimes nudged by near-still air. Britta's gloved hand streaks the frost film of a Volvo hood.

Her exhilaration condenses at the mouth as a stream of fog. She looks up at Viv, a few steps ahead, mounting the soft, winding grade of a hedge-lined community.

Britta hustles to narrow the gap, spewing more fog. She seizes Viv's hand.

BRITTA

(panting)

Feel like Sisyphus climbing this damn hill! Cause that's one Hell of a shape you're in!

Viv's several paces away in an instant. Britta scampers after.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

You don't remember having cancer?

VIV

I don't remember *any* mythology.

As Britta closes, she spies an ECKERD photo envelope bulging from her front pocket.

BRITTA

(panting)

What's that?

Viv pulls out the envelope without losing speed. Offers them.

VIV

These? Keep up with me, I'll give you the tour.

Britta takes them, shuffles through.

BRITTA

I've seen all these a million times.

VIV

But what have you heard?

Viv seizes the top photo on the stack. Glances at it.

VIV (CONT'D)

When did I have time to talk
before? I married up two feet and
two classes -- we were always gonna
be in the shadows, you and me.

Britta cranes to see it, slowing her.

PHOTO: NEWBORN BRITTA outside a run-down country workshop,
held and inspected by AMES SMITH (50s, rugged, the soot-
imbued skin of a man who is his work). She's flanked by Viv,
looking on with an awkward grin, in-turn clutched by Bill.

VIV (CONT'D)

You were stellar as a baby. The
only creature that could turn the
spigot in your Grandpa Ames. Other
than for you, his tears were made
of wood: he'd get on a lathe in
tough times. And sometimes there'd
be these intricate, almost
religiously textured cylinders
stocking the woodshed up to the
ceiling. That's how we knew we'd be
hungry: when the cylinder stacks
were taller than we were.

BRITTA

(fond)

I think I still have one.

VIV

I gave you three. My Dad was a hard-
ass, but he'd begin to blubber and
blather soon as he got to holding
you.

BRITTA

Do you think he'd do the same if he
saw me *now*?

Viv notices herself in the picture. She presses a writhing,
angry fingertip into her smile in the photo.

VIV

He'd say you were stellar as a
baby.

Britta, bitten and burning out, forces agreement.

VIV (CONT'D)

Next one.

Britta snickers as she sees it.

BRITTA

They made their money in
toothpaste, right?

Offers Viv one of the totally tall MORAN FAMILY, numbering about fifty, posing hillside in some quadrant of Appalachia that is inexplicably connected to a mansion and a fleet of ROLLS ROYCES. Yet many are missing teeth.

VIV

You don't really know about family as a four-letter word, Britta Jean, until you've taken too-long a look at your Daddy's family reunion photo. Rockefellers of Appalachia. Enough teeth there for a set. For one dentist. At one appointment.

Viv picks her teenaged, short sore-thumb self out, kneeling in the front row before a lanky, baby-faced Bill. Venom on her breath.

VIV (CONT'D)

Moran Backwoods Denture Cream. *"A Union You Can't Secede From."*

Britta snorts.

BRITTA

I'm sport-less, cream-less. So who the fuck am I like? Gotta be you.

Viv studies the picture.

VIV

(on picture)

Don't think you share a shore with either of us.

(under her breath)

I should've severed the man's orchids myself. But who makes a knife that big?

Britta's shaking her head, failing to understand.

BRITTA

Should I order another CT?

VIV

A what?

BRITTA

Days ago you were hoping you'd find
faith before you died, just so you
could hope to find him again!
That's the man I knew. Who is this
thing you've suddenly begun to
indict?

Viv coils with a smile so evil that her teeth sharpen. Britta suddenly exasperated as she holds up the photo stack, realizing --

BRITTA (CONT'D)

You were going to throw these
pictures out, weren't --

Viv nods with brio.

VIV

-- and how's Mikaela?

Britta jerks to a stop. No affect change. Just no motion.

INT. MIKAELA'S ROOM AT DAD'S - DAY

Whereas there's OMNIPRESENT MOTION in this bald and desperate quarter: the floorboards BOW LOUDLY from a repetitive leap and landing. A looping YOUTUBE clip of SUPER MARIO on Mikaela's laptop: he crouches, charges up, JUMPS SUPER HIGH, enabling him to headbutt a block that releases a MUSHROOM.

A surly Mikaela, palming a UF volleyball in each hand, stands beneath Diana, a VINTAGE CABBAGE PATCH DOLL TAPED TO THE RATTY CEILING. Mikaela crouches, gazes up at her doll.

In-synch with Mario, she LEAPS, striving to touch Diana with the top of her head. Close on the doll's foot: reading BRITTA in fading sharpie. Again. A foot away. Again.

MIKAELA'S POV

Zooming upward towards Diana. Close on Mikaela's skyward, raging eyes.

EXT. ROBINSON DUPLEX - DAY

-- As the home quivers --

Hints of dilapidation: a second-story shuttered window above brown, uncured lawn. Slumping basketball hoop dangling torn net.

Front door cracked: Charles' slender face, peeking down at Britta from above the door frame. When they're around each other, the air wafts with their foul history.

Britta strains for a look inside the home. The heavily-used furniture -- all blue and orange -- seems donated from ancient University municipal causes. An old piece of bleacher acts as the couch in front of the TV.

BRITTA
What is she doing?

CHARLES
Getting after it.

Britta's Porsche parked in the street. Viv patiently sitting in the passenger seat. Charles notices her.

BRITTA
She's cured.

Charles regards Viv for a nanosecond, then is quickly back on Britta. No miracle can surmount their past.

BRITTA (CONT'D)
Mikaela??? Come here please!

The jumping upstairs HALTS. A volleyball skips down the staircase facing the door. Charles stops it with his foot. He taps it, causing it to curve toward the foot of the stairs.

It's followed by MIKAELA bounding down, PLACEKICKING THE VOLLEYBALL INTO BRITTA, who retracts with not a split-second to spare before getting smacked.

MIKAELA
CUNT!

Charles steps away to soothe the girl, allowing the door to swing open. Britta scampers inside as if to intercept Mikaela as Charles STRUGGLES to hold back their phenom daughter.

MIKAELA (CONT'D)
I want you to burn.

BRITTA
Okay. I'll set myself on fire.

MIKAELA
You better burn faster than that.

BRITTA
Come out and see grandma.

Britta starts toward Mikaela who SWINGS AT HER.

BRITTA (CONT'D)
I'm sorry you feel that way. It's
been a week of choosing what to
care about immediately--

Mikaela caves into a corner, too proud to cry.

BRITTA (CONT'D)
Though your grandmother was dying,
it seems I still chose wrong.

MIKAELA
Fuck your bitch-ass.

Britta patronizes the cut by throwing her arms up in defeat.

THROUGH DOORWAY

Viv watching the scene with interest from the Porsche.

BACK INSIDE

BRITTA
Did you get in?

Mikaela bounds up the stairs two-at-a-time. Her door slams
and the house shakes like she's just jumped. Britta rolls her
eyes toward Charles, arms folded off by the kitchen.

BRITTA (CONT'D)
Did she?

He indicates the front door. Britta simpers, obliges. Charles
bolts after her.

EXT. ROBINSON DUPLEX - DAY

Charles and Britta *en garde* in the front yard.

CHARLES
You couldn't call to check in? And
then want me to care that the
racist bitch is better!?

BRITTA
Vintage deadbeat deflection.

CHARLES
She WAS RAISED BY MY MOTHER!

BRITTA

Your mom helped out while I was in school. Any of the women who were left, you helped yourself to.

CHARLES

She's always been welcome any time.

BRITTA

If you ever again make me out to be less than you about my daughter -

CHARLES

-my?

BRITTA

You who didn't come around until she was almost your height, sniffing around her for promise like it was a period stench - **I'll fucking kill you.**

CHARLES

Don't kill yourself with the bottle first.

BRITTA

Which of your other kids are you dropping right now to be here?

CHARLES

Seems I showed up right as you was dropping *her*.

BRITTA

Could be one you don't know about.

CHARLES

Actually, to drop someone, you gotta *pick em up* first.

BRITTA

You're her sibling factory.

CHARLES

Today she named the factory "Dad."
How about that, *Doc*?

As Britta fumes, they're both paused by the emergence of VIV moving past them without acknowledgment, through the doorway and ascending the stairs. Britta starts after, but Charles's swift arm barricades her.

INT. MIKAELA'S ROOM AT DAD'S - DAY

Mikaela sitting on a twin mattress, fire-less, playing NBA JAM on a vintage SEGA GENESIS hooked to a shitty small flatscreen tilted against a wall.

The door opens.

MIKAELA

Nah.

Viv peeks into the room, sneering at the walls with nothing more on them than filth and a Gators volleyball schedule. She tries to enter, but she's so taxed by the squalor that her attempt is more of a prolapse.

CLOSE on Mikaela staring, head yawing. Grandma hasn't even acknowledged Mikaela as she scrutinizes each bit of scum.

VIV

Why isn't the room in a diaper?

Mikaela finds herself standing.

MIKAELA

Why aren't you?

(beat)

Aren't you dying?

VIV

Never got very far doing what I'm supposed to do.

Mikaela takes a seat to sober up. Viv looks out at the window at the reprehensible view.

VIV (CONT'D)

Whatever. Look.

She sits next Mikaela.

VIV (CONT'D)

Apparently I was sick. Now I'm not. Whether I was or wasn't, your mother has always surged the stench of decay toward us. No longer - she cannot ignore your death as she kills you by trying to control you.

Mikaela all ears leaning in.

VIV (CONT'D)

(imitating)

Practice *this*, Mikaela!

(MORE)

VIV (CONT'D)

Be someone else like *that*, Mikaela!
Dig dig DIG! Let's dig into her for
a stanza: her high-flying
grandshitbag is dead, so she has to
be you. But she's not, yet still
she swings her ball-and-chain at
you. But she's not even you divided
by two. Not even divided by *four*.
She's you divided by everything she
can't let go of.

Mikaela rapt listening.

VIV (CONT'D)

Let her fuck off. Not your problem
that you don't need to heal like
she does. You're a Whitman poem,
and-

Mikaela disinters a smile. Take a picture while it lasts.

MIKAELA

She can't read Whitman.

VIV

She can't READ! I remember you had
a game. How'd it go?

Mikaela scans the carpet in the corner. A stapled packet lies
face down. Mikaela snatches it. Hands it to Viv, who studies
it. *An offer sheet from UF.*

MIKAELA

We won. Denaria, the girl I was
competing with for the scholarship
to UF, elected to go to Georgia.

Viv leafs through the offer, scanning the boilerplate with a
finger

VIV

Do you need to write an essay?

MIKAELA

Don't think so. I think I'm in.

Viv sets the document down.

VIV

Just remember: in this town it's
about a ball. And for money, and
luck, it's only about a *football* or
a *basketball* or a *baseball*, so long
as it's attached to a *cock*.

(MORE)

VIV (CONT'D)

Your Grandpa Bill became forgettable at light speed. So he moved us back to Gainesville, because Gainesville produces more man-made islands than Dubai. It lets has-been fans make has-been jocks feel contemporary over a beer. And everyone can always be over a beer here. Your Dad's drunk on it right now, and he only played in Germany for a year. If you attend the University of Florida, I guarantee that you'll also major in The Past.

MIKAELA

I'm studying Astronomy and European History.

Viv deeply considering.

VIV

No-

Mikaela laughs.

VIV (CONT'D)

The Past ain't history. History doesn't change all the time, like The Past does here.

MIKAELA

Then my Past will have to be part of history.

VIV

(nodding)

You play and probably define volleyball. But you got double 710s on your SAT and a decent writing score. Amherst, Duke.

MIKAELA

People turn down Ivy League schools to attend Florida all the time.

VIV

Do you play baseball with a cock?

Mikaela peers into her.

VIV (CONT'D)

You wanna go pro?

What if I do?

VIV (CONT'D)
I don't know. I hated your ass
until I didn't.

Mikaela smiles at this. It's oddly sufficient.

MIKAELA
You called me the "n-word."

Viv forces eye contact as she twists in the hailing embers of Hell, Mikaela's accusation exposing bottomless shame. She looks away, deals with it alone. Mikaela charmed by the expiation, growing fond of this vulnerable creature.

VIV
Come here.

Mikaela inches closer. Viv recruits Mikaela into the same hug routine that Britta performed on Howell at the bar. Genetics.

VIV (CONT'D)
(winding her hand
impatiently)
COME ON COME COME ON!

Even though she offers the grimace of a woman swallowing a lizard, Viv squeezes Mikaela in the hug that sustains them.

EXT. ROBINSON DUPLEX - DAY

Britta and Charles looking at anything but each other, but at least they're silent. Viv emerges outside, eyeing Charles up-and-down.

VIV
Black sheep come in all sizes...

Britta horrified. Charles eyes right back.

VIV (CONT'D)
How's her grandma?

CHARLES
Dead six years.

VIV
So still as engaging as driftwood.

Viv steps past them toward the car.

VIV (CONT'D)

Do send her my best the next time
you see her.

Mikaela steps into the breach, casing Britta from a distance.

BRITTA

(noticing Mikaela)

We were discussing a dinner. If
there was ever an occasion to
jumpstart the whole "being civil"
charade...

VIV

You all want to come together
because we have eating in common?

CHARLES

(playing along)

Eating in common with you!

Viv grins. Even Britta un-puckers her asshole for the moment.

VIV

When do you plan on being out of
food again, Charles? We'll try for
then.

Charles with a sarcastic guffaw.

CHARLES

Still as bigoted as ever!

MIKAELA

You can't take a joke? She likes
you!

Britta cocks her head-- *she does?*

VIV

Chuck, you and I haven't seen eye-
to, well, actually I don't see
anything you see. But you've got a
fan in this girl, and therefore
less of a fan in me.

Britta takes Mikaela's hand, inviting the daughter to cringe.

BRITTA

We were reminded to come together
like you have, Mom -

She glances at her daughter. Reminded better.

BRITTA (CONT'D)
And Mikaela. Of course.

Mikaela rips her hand away. Britta deludes excitement.

BRITTA (CONT'D)
Good news. Mikaela's as good as
any.

Mikaela discovers imaginary birds on a power line. Britta finds her way back to her mother, beaming at her recovery. Shaking her head at it in disbelief at it, which distracts Mikaela from the birds.

INT. MORAN RESIDENCE - DAY

The front doorbell RINGS.

Britta - wearing a polo and jeans - opens it, revealing Howell with a bottle of wine, uncomfortable in a tucked-in dress shirt. Britta bubbles at the sight of him.

BRITTA
Early. Hug or no hug?

HOWELL
Huh?

BRITTA
How are you?

HOWELL
Feeling good. You?

She looks in the driveway, no cars but theirs.

BRITTA
Where'd you park?

HOWELL
Is she eating today?

Britta beside herself trying to tell him.

BRITTA
Yep.

HOWELL
Talking?

Britta pulls away, stalls, endeavoring a way into this.

BRITTA
It's gone.

HOWELL
What is?

BRITTA
What else?

HOWELL
The cancer?

BRITTA
Yes.

HOWELL
From stage four?

BRITTA
Over 1.5 million new cases of cancer every year in the US. There have been eight instances of the spontaneous remission of lung cancer ever recorded.

Howell, twitches adjusting to the news.

HOWELL
My God.

Finally Britta has a vessel into which she can pour this uncanny bounty. He charges into the hug she initiates. Britta luxuriates in the contact. His thinking pupils glow.

HOWELL (CONT'D)
My God.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Howell navigating the dinner table shaking hands, Britta holding his free hand as he's introduced to MIKAELA, JOCELYN, CHARLES, SHAH and KELLER.

He sets eyes on VIV walking in - and is immediately hit by a dizzying spiritual gust. Britta amorously massages his shoulders (Mikaela watching) and he recovers, and he finds he's descending to hug Viv. She offers a handshake.

Howell shakes the hand.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

CHATTER from the dining room. Britta by the sink, still coping with her assessment of the phantasmic Viv, who puts the finishing seasons on a heaping plate of steaks.

She grabs a meat thermometer, takes a steak temperature. The meat satisfies. Britta reaches for the steak plate. Viv yanks it from reach.

BRITTA
I'm still not allowed help you.

VIV
Your date is weird. Why?

BRITTA
Death in the family.

Viv chugs coffee.

VIV
Pussy.

BRITTA
Did I like the Flintstones as a kid? Or have red hair real young?

Viv gazes out the kitchen window. Teeth clenched.

VIV
Beg your pardon?

BRITTA
I could never understand the nickname "Pebbles."

INT. FAMILY HOUSING, UF - FLASHBACK

TRACKING on young steeled Viv, Britta (4, hair reddish-brown) in tow. They're rushing from a bedroom, where fast-fading behind is BILL WITH A BLONDE UF DAZZLER-TYPE, covering themselves in a sheet.

The front door is wide open, groceries dropped in the stroller next to it.

Britta placed onto a couch in front of an antenna set showing THE FLINTSTONES: a scene with Fred and Wilma cooing at their daughter Pebbles.

Little Britta's hypnotized, unaware of a door shutting, the SHADOW of the Moran Tower descending onto the couch, until Bill sits beside, strokes Britta's hair while she watches. Britta cuddles with him out of instinct, her eyes never leaving the set. Bill places her on his lap, wrapping her safely in his vines-for-arms.

In the background we see Viv in the kitchen, spreading peanut butter onto saltines.

BACK TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

OVER DINING ROOM CHATTER ESCALATING as Viv expands with purulent anger. She blinks once, twice, downregulating with deep breathing until the anger is gone.

Britta watching with unease. Viv steels herself. Snatches the plate of steak.

VIV

You enjoyed the program.

She darts from the room.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

A feast assembled. Dr. Keller chitchatting among Charles, Mikaela, and volleyball friends Andy and Jocelyn.

Howell and Britta tucked side-by-side, with Viv beside them at the end of the table. She smiles at the assemblage. Shah straining a look at Viv, still wondering if he should take a pen to this gospel.

Charles hovers alone at the other end as Mikaela unwinds, sharing her good place with friends through Snapchats.

VIV

Does everybody have wine,
strychnine, whatever?

Viv points at Mikaela, who nods.

VIV (CONT'D)

The prayer, Miss Ascending.

Mikaela clears her throat, CLASPS HER HANDS IN MOCK PRAYER.

MIKAELA

Ok. If I may begin.

Mikaela struggling to stay serious. The struggle infects Viv, whose poker face cracks. She leans her head down. All pray.

MIKAELA (CONT'D)
We are gathered here today
relatively by force...

Mikaela's friends snicker. Britta glowers at her.

MIKAELA (CONT'D)
What? That was it.

But not for long as she's swept up in it, snorting a stifled laugh. Those who get it do laugh. Those who don't laugh harder. Giving permission for Howell to as well, aided by a pat on his knee from Britta.

Viv soaks it all in, the happiest we've seen her. Shah notices the table configuration. Something objectionable - even insulting - about it. He lifts a finger to be noticed.

DR. SHAH
Mrs. Moran: as this has the
proportions of The Last Supper, you
must sit at the center of the
table. So long as you're well,
you're to always be in the center
of the art.

Viv moves her chair and food to the center, displacing Jocelyn and Andy -- they scoot down. Stares at Charles.

VIV
Charles!
(directing to her right)
Take Judas' seat.

Mikaela BURSTS OUT LAUGHING. Mikaela rushes up and hugs him to stanch any hard feelings, gives him a noogie. Charles disarms the seriousness with a playful shake of his head. Britta looks far away, into a brief assurance from Howell.

VIV (CONT'D)
(over talking)
Now a toast. To my child.

Viv stands. The others follow.

VIV (CONT'D)
(indicating Britta)
Britta. A part of me since I can
remember.

The crowd rapt.

VIV (CONT'D)

Maybe it's more of a story.

(clears throat)

Britta always needed to be her father, or rather the parts she knew. But unfortunately the most they will ever have in common is darkness.

The dinner party is muted. Britta gawks with confusion.

VIV (CONT'D)

Unlike Bill, Britta -- at five foot-four and blessed with an unwarranted desire to be "really good" -- couldn't even make the UF basketball team as a walk-on. No wonder: her accolades in high school included 3.8 points per game as part of their point guard depth. Sure, she'll play in college!

Britta's head settles on the table.

VIV (CONT'D)

So she doped -- halotestin, HRT, D-bol - and became kind of less-bad, enough to be admitted as a charity walk-on a week before the first game.

Britta buries her face in her arms, soaking in the words as they pelt her as the others idly dwell in the massacre, afraid to speak or flinch.

VIV (CONT'D)

She still sucked at basketball, but she was strong -- now she sucked *strongly*.

Charles staggers into his seat...and then the others. Only Mikaela, who seems to be trying to piece it together, remains standing.

VIV (CONT'D)

She doped too much! Doped like she drinks today: it gave her the rack of a baboon for awhile, with a clit probably three inches wide - who knows what she's got now? Bone-rotting farts, like mustard gas.

Howell shuttles helpless looks between Viv and her unmoving daughter, who gives a moribund "thumbs-up."

VIV (CONT'D)
 A flopping, sagging mess of
 teenaged angst.

DR. KELLER
 I think you need to go back to the
 hospital.

Viv sips some of her toast wine. Shakes her head

VIV
 Globbs of acne that could frost a
 wedding cake. Unholy B.O. And if
 you could believe it, even *more*
 personality-disordered than normal.
 Eventually they didn't even need to
 test her to know. They didn't even
want to test her. Kicked her off
 the team. Fled the school like the
 pocket of pus she'd become. At that
 point she's not even "Bill Moran's
 daughter." Goddamnit.

Viv shakes her head at a shame so deep it strikes laughter.

VIV (CONT'D)
 She's "Did you hear what happened
 to Bill Moran's daughter?".
 (looking around)
 And you all never heard what came
 next.

Britta gives the "okay" sign.

VIV (CONT'D)
 Britta tried to kill herself.

DR. KELLER
 That's enough!

Britta sits up, stares blankly at Viv. Looks at the crowd
 taking her in like a wake. Britta nods sick approval.

VIV
 She chased Oxy with Oxy and water.
 And was finally, for once,
impressive for her suicide attempt.

Britta holds her glass up, sarcastically toasting her shame
 with a rightful tremor.

VIV (CONT'D)
 You're damn right I'm gonna toast
 you.

(MORE)

VIV (CONT'D)

It's how you became a vaginal first: occupational therapy to psychotherapy to night classes. To third in her class. Chief of Anesthesiology. Show me another woman, let alone one of her wounds, who's done *that*.

(turning to Britta)

And your momentum has carried.

(pointing to Mikaela)

With that I form the toast, with wine, to honor what is now only a drinking problem for this mother, daughter, doctor:

She thrusts her salutary glass way too high in the air. Nobody moves.

VIV (CONT'D)

To Britta, to Mikaela, and to colorful perseverance!

Britta rises to her feet. One arm slowly bulldozes the table of its contents to the floor as people spring back to avoid the debris. Doing it like it needs to be done, a chore. She begins to shake violently. Howell catches her, glares Viv off as Mikaela steps toward her mother, wanting help but unable.

Keller and Shah come forward to help -

BRITTA

I'm sorry.

- as Viv mutters to herself, breaks for the kitchen as the guests attend to Britta.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Viv yanks a stack of CLEAN DISHES from the cabinet, tosses them in one of the basins of her double sink where they erupt in a CLANGOR, some perish on the way down.

VIV

I counted sixteen "He's in a better place"s after he died. Two "Did he smoke?"s. Fifty-two of the "anything you need, you just..."

She grins as the dishes are snatched, scrubbed over, files them down with brillo.

VIV (CONT'D)
 I don't know forty-one of you from
 Adam.

Another CRACKS. Viv turns on the disposal in the empty basin.

VIV (CONT'D)
 Eleven came calling half the time
 there's food or booze, so on
 average I'm not even supported by
 whole people.

She introduces a large shard of broken dish into the roaring disposal, which CHIPS AT IT.

VIV (CONT'D)
 And then they eat half of what they
 took.

Still, Viv descends toward the sputtering disposal, her hand one more food scrap.

VIV (CONT'D)
 Morans, I tell you: M-O-R-A-N-Ses
 have always spelled it wrong.

Keller enters, notices, SHUTS OFF THE GRINDING DISPOSAL.

DR. KELLER
 Are you divorcing your husband, or
 your daughter?

Viv faces Keller. Her pulsing hand splashes coffee from a mug she snatches and sips from. Britta trickles in behind, still shaking from shock. Tempered by Howell's soft hand at her shoulder.

DR. KELLER (CONT'D)
 Since you've been home, it seems
 you've been saying a lot of
 difficult, unprecedented things
 about the man you used to
 celebrate.

Shah fixes on Viv. Nods agreement.

DR. KELLER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 And about the kid you made with
 him.

Shah's nod slows, raking in the awe and scholarship.

BRITTA (O.S.)
 Are her mets back?

His nod morphs into a head shake as he smiles, seeing if not a cure, then at least the shape of one.

DR. SHAH

No.

Viv sets the coffee down, twists her fingers around a dial trying to open of a combo safe on the counter. She unlocks it. Viv fidgets with her back to her students - who are all here now. They listen to what's obscured by her back: a cartridge of ammunition loaded. A safety flicked off. A gun cocked.

She turns pointing a 9 MM. Her aim hops from person to person. Shah, Keller and Howell stab their hands in the air. Britta doesn't react. Mikaela frozen, gripped at the shoulders by Charles. Jocelyn covertly dials her phone, casually walks from the room. Viv aims at Britta.

VIV

Was it me and the milkman? Your Dad
and a dwarf? For chrissake I'm
taller than you.

(beat)

How are you so short?

Britta shrugs. The shrug might be all she has left.

VIV (CONT'D)

Isn't that why you tried to off
yourself?

BRITTA

I suppose so.

VIV

Don't you feel cursed?

BRITTA

I suppose so.

VIV

HOW IS IT OKAY that you're a stump
like me, when I fucked something
extraordinary to make you? That he
reigns while you and I have to
fight to matter along with the rest
of the sad fucks in the fat, tinny
part of the bell curve. We're the
pelts of an animal that'll never go
extinct.

(cracking)

On display, but dead, but WHO
CARES?

Britta shakes her head.

VIV (CONT'D)
He was DESPICABLE!

Britta speaks with the strength of a billowing curtain that fears being too loud.

BRITTA
How? You never praised anything *but* him. Do you like anything?

VIV
You and that slime between your ears have no way to recollect what's not yours! Sitting and shitting and crying and waiting for what makes you keep on don't cover what-
(realizing, puts the gun down)
You remind me of me.

BRITTA
I have friends.
(softer)
You had descriptions of friends.
(almost undetectable)
Shit to talk.

VIV
I had *him*.

Britta stares at Viv, grows with indignation. The ghost of someone who never mattered materializes into a voice that can't be ignored.

BRITTA
Because you quarantined the planet from him?!

VIV
And you're nothing like him.
(COUGHING)
Common. And *that's* why you remind me of me. Whom he cheated on.

BRITTA
He adored you -

VIV
(tearing up)
You know you wouldn't have been me if you had taken more Oxycontin.
(MORE)

VIV (CONT'D)
 (growing shorter of
 breath)
 But here we are.

Police lights flicker through the window.

MIKAELA
 Grandma Viv?

Shah watching with great distress. Britta's shaking now
 convulsion-like.

BRITTA
 Why do you say he cheated? What
 evidence-

VIV
 You fucking dumbass.

Britta waits.

VIV (CONT'D)
 Because I'm nothing!

COUGHING AND WHEEZING seem to illuminate an insight.

VIV (CONT'D)
 But can you cheat on nothing?

BRITTA
 No.

VIV
 So he didn't cheat.

A powerful RAP ON THE DOOR as Viv is overcome by her
 respiratory failings. Saccadic terror in both of their eyes.
 Britta hands Viv a napkin. She COUGHS BLOOD INTO IT. Shows
 the stain to doctor daughter.

Finally. A relentless fist pounds their front door.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)
 Open the door!

Viv withering before us, each hack ejecting life as she
 DOUBLES OVER with a full-body shutdown. Britta watches Viv's
 legs give out -- she crashes to the floor before Britta can
 catch her. Unconscious as her belly flutters with laborious
 breath. And beyond: the belly goes still.

EXT. MORAN RESIDENCE - DAY

Ambulance lights among those of the six police cruisers surrounding the home. Shah and Keller help load VIV into the ambulance, Mikaela by her side. It pulls away, its sirens BLARING.

CLOSE on Howell connecting eyes with listless Britta.

 HOWELL
What can I do for you?

She's in privation. Impenetrable.

 HOWELL (CONT'D)
Where do you want to go? *If* you
want to go.

 BRITTA
Into the heart of stupidity.
Are we there yet?

Howell thinks, laughs to himself.

 BRITTA (CONT'D)
But not stupid like this. Dumb. I
need you to be dumb.

 HOWELL
I can take you there.

 BRITTA
Where?

Howell takes her hand.

 HOWELL
I am Groot?

Britta nods, cracks a needed laugh.

INT. PORSCHE CAYENNE - MOVING - NIGHT

Howell driving, turning off a main artery toward a dirt road deep with wild greenery and patched with repeated PRIVATE PROPERTY/NO TRESPASSING signs.

 HOWELL
I'm going to show you the world's
shittiest violin collection.

Britta startled by her own BELLY LAUGHING.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The soothing drizzle of an emptying rain. A flashlight streak mows through the black. Britta, the light source, shoves aside bits of foliage as it's hacked by Howell, machete in-hand, pushing down a dirt road.

She whiffs the petrichor. The flashlight hits something 50 feet away: a large AIRSTREAM trapped in two generations of vines and weeds.

BRITTA

She's got "two" personalities now.
Means she can make a deal with the
Devil and still be the Devil.

Howell watches the trailer like he's hawsered to it. He drifts back.

HOWELL

She had his fire about her.

Britta reminisces as Howell hesitates.

BRITTA

I remember being four when he proposed to her AGAIN, after he was drafted by the 76ers in the second round. Hired a concert pianist to play the long-form ambient piece MUSIC FOR AIRPORTS at the airport -- he didn't move from that knee, didn't move his hand from hers or his gaze from them. The piece is a loop. The pianist played it for FOUR HOURS until their flight.

Slowly he's moored back. Walking toward it.

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

She didn't just say yes again -- she rented out a steakhouse when they landed in Philly.

Howell nods.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

There's no Devil in any of that.

Britta looks at Howell confronting the trailer. Graffiti scrawled on the roof: "HOWELL KEEP OUT." MATCH to the same message on the roof of the forgotten home: "HOWELL KEEP OUT" half-gleaned by moonlight. Howell rips weeds off the door as Britta recovers on a mossy log.

His hand grazes the Airstream door. He dislodges it with both of his hands. He shines the flashlight on the interior, breathing getting heavier. He pants.

HOWELL
We're all manipulated.

INT. AIRSTREAM - NIGHT

Howell's flashlight reveals barely a human's worth of alcove to stand in. Offers ingress to Britta, who hunches behind him as they witness--

500 units of untouched, unsold old store stock of a toy violin: "THE DREAM BOW," complete with unevenly-printed burnt orange packaging that features STRINGS THE LEOPARD, a cartoon leopard maestro lifted from the Hanna-Barbera design of SNAGGLEPUSS. Strings frolics with his violin on a rainbow as he watches potential purchasers make wiser decisions.

Britta maneuvers to select a unit from a shelf, has to tug to pull it out of its flush wedge. Glimpses the name: "THE DREAM BOW." Title printed in *Comic Sans*.

The flimsy, one-off cardboard package bows in her hand as she clutches it, the celluloid window collapsing onto the thing inside. MADE IN CHINA sticker covers a piece of vital backstory. She cracks the dry yellow tape on the end and slides out the eggshell insert, unearthing the DREAM BOW. She examines it as Howell looks on.

HOWELL
Vanessa was bi-polar. One mania, "with a recession looming," she thought people would need music, but wouldn't be able to afford quality.
(gestures to the toys)
Took the family savings to a factory in China.

The more Howell reveals, the more he behaves like the wood surrounding an activated corkscrew.

HOWELL (CONT'D)
(air quotes)
"Recession-proof violins."

Britta plays a note: the instrument burrs horribly as the bow drags across the awful craggy string. As they share a wince, they make eye contact.

They laugh - his darker than hers. He pats around for something above the boxes.

HOWELL (CONT'D)
And stored up here is how she spent
the house equity...

As he searches on his tiptoes, Britta checks her vibrating phone: sees 6 MISSED CALLS. Pockets it. Finds Howell, whose face cants with pain as he sees what he's touching.

He smiles in that opposite way.

HOWELL (CONT'D)
"The Next Tony the Tiger!"

He sweeps three boxes to the floor: packaged push-button plushes of Strings, the companion toy, housed in awful cardboard of the same pay grade.

HOWELL (CONT'D)
Dad bought the only one she sold.

Britta picks one up, inspects: its dead-bead eyes and slipshod stitching convey neither leopardness nor hope for fun.

HOWELL (CONT'D)
Remember how I told you they died
in a car accident?

Britta gazes into the face of the doll.

HOWELL (CONT'D)
On their way to the attorney.

CLOSER ON THE HORRID SPAWN. Britta presses its paw where it says "PUSH", unleashing an epicene lilt that is an even fouler ripoff of Snagglepuss than the box art.

STRINGS THE LEOPARD
WELL (HUH-HUH), I WOULD HATE TO
"STRING" YA ALONG (HEE-HEE), BUT
YOU'RE REALLY SWELL!

Howell LOSES IT, PUNCHING all manner of shitty product off the shelf. He turns to Britta, who regards a lighter that she's produced from her pocket.

HOWELL
Tell me that's not the stupidest
fucking thing you've ever seen in
your life.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

A NOXIOUS, STYGIAN BLAZE BURSTING TOWARD THE FOREST CEILING

Stacks of DREAM BOWS wait their turn beside a molten cairn, burning from weeds, sticks and trash. Howell glares into the flame, pyre-to-pyre.

He holds a STRINGS doll. He presses the button.

STRINGS THE LEOPARD
WHICH STRINGS DID YOU PULL TO *SOUND*
SO GOOD? WAIT! MY NAME IS STRINGS!
YEEOOOWWWW!!!

Howell starts to laugh, but it dies quickly as he sets it into the blaze. It kindles immediately. He waves for one more. Presses the button as Britta hands it to him.

STRINGS THE LEOPARD (CONT'D)
COME COMMIT SOME RANDOM ACTS OF
VIOLINS WITH ME: MAESTRO STRINGS!

Howell sets it next to the other in the blaze. Steps back.

BRITTA
Lamar.

He's looking into the forest.

HOWELL
Their chance to feel bad dies with
them.

Staring into the gnarl of trees and past.

HOWELL (CONT'D)
It'll bounce around inside of you
if they're gone. Tell her to fuck
off. Anything.

BRITTA
Lamar.

He steps into the fire, clearing aside rubble to snatch the REMAINS OF A STRINGS DOLL as his body burns. Rummaging around like the pit's unlit.

HOWELL
Or do you want something like *this*
for closure?

He steps out tucking what's left of Strings beneath his arm as he stumbles toward the forest like a blind prophet at the Eschaton. Skin blistered and exuding, shirt sleeve ablaze.

He pauses Britta with the index finger inside the burning sleeve. The spectacle consumes her.

Howell lowers his finger as he pushes into the trees. The sleeve flame floats and flickers, dancing alone in the wooded black without a source until it's too small to see.

INT. ICU ROOM - NIGHT

MIKAELA, in mourning over Viv, on a VENTILATOR. She dumps her VOLLEYBALL OFFERS - Auburn, UCLA, Nebraska, etc - on the floor beside the bed.

MIKAELA

These came overnight, after my game. I don't give a shit how fast they can mail me a blowjob.

She knocks away the few that flutter onto Viv.

MIKAELA (CONT'D)

I was squeezed like toothpaste into every trait about me. I hate basketball. I hate volleyball. I never want to see another net. I like jumping. That's it. Not sports that require it. *Jumping*.

Mikaela kisses her grandma on the cheek.

MIKAELA (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Keller walks in.

DR. KELLER

We can't get a hold of your mother. You?

MIKAELA

(shaking head)

You know that tirade with the gun, or whatever?

DR. KELLER

Yes, I remember the whatever.

MIKAELA

Grandma Viv only hated me because she hated Doc. We learned that their problems run gun-deep.

DR. KELLER

Your mo- Doc has some decisions to make about grandma.

MIKAELA

You won't let the one who cares die, right?

DR. KELLER

We're window dressing, Mikaela. Everything she's been through has been free of our hands for months.

Mikaela can't suffer the room, escapes it as she's sucked into her phone. Keller watches the respirator bring Viv back from the brink with each compression. He takes out his tablet. Loads YOUTUBE.

DR. KELLER (CONT'D)

I've never heard of him.
(lower on Viv, as if
offending)

I'm sorry I didn't grow up here.

He types "BILL MORAN GATORS" into the search bar. Clicks a link for BILL MORAN HIGHLIGHTS. Swivels back to Viv, vitals chirping steadily between ventilator COMPRESSIONS.

ON SCREEN: Vintage clips of Bill playing ball over ANNOUNCER PLAY-BY-PLAY. More lay-ups that dunks, and among the dunks there are few barn-burners. A few blocks. Mediocre player. Keller stunned.

DR. KELLER (CONT'D)

He's average!

Shah enters, poring over Viv's latest figures. Depressed.

DR. KELLER (CONT'D)

Wasn't he supposed to be Bill Russell? He reminds me of Bill Wennington.

Shah notices the clip, monitors Viv.

DR. SHAH

What else are they doing in this town?

DR. KELLER

Mrs. Moran makes him out to dunk on water, yet he wasn't even an All-American?

DR. SHAH

He was their center for almost three championships.

Keller walks over holding the loud tablet.

DR. KELLER

6.8 points per game?!

DR. SHAH

Doesn't matter. They love him here.

Keller and Shah watch the final highlight next to Viv' bed: Bill makes an unremarkable put-back basket as time expires to win a NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP; CROWD CHEERS, PERFORMING THE CHOMP AS THEY MOB THE COURT.

DR. SHAH (CONT'D)

(on Viv)

You've treated the folks here for three years now. It's not living vicariously. It's living.

Keller bewildered by the applause.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

THE MORAN TOWER HAS SEALED IT! BACK-TO-BACK CHAMPIONSHIPS FOR THE GATORS!

The broadcast courses down through whichever meridians within Viv have been listening. Her vitals plummet as the monitor trills: BP falls, SpO2 86%...82%...79%.

DR. KELLER

Jesus.

Shah peers into the hallway for help. The video ends. And with it also the APPLAUSE FOR BILL. Viv's vitals IMPROVE TO WHAT THEY WERE BEFORE, STABILIZE. Shah - his back to us -- listens to the beeps of convalescence. He turns to Keller.

DR. KELLER (CONT'D)

We need to find one where they're--

DR. SHAH

-- booing.

Two nurses enter but Shah waves them off.

DR. SHAH (CONT'D)
Type in "1980 championship ending
Kentucky." It's the year
Gainesville forgot.

Keller scouring search hits for the hazy clip. Shah studies Viv's ICU monitor.

DR. SHAH (CONT'D)
Ask anyone here, and it's as if
they're denying the Holocaust. All
they remember was that everyone was
fishing.

Dr. Keller pulls up an unmarked clip of letters and numbers. Shah filling space with anxious shallow breath.

Keller CLICKS IT ON, brings the tablet near Viv. Shah watches her -- Keller stares at the game.

ON SCREEN: Colossal BOOING. The frustrated UF squad watches Bill Moran tank another free-throw. Is that lone Viv at the bottom of the screen, cheering and applauding against the tide like the manager of a heel wrestler?

ANNOUNCER 1 (O.S.)
Bill Moran with TWO MORE misses.
He's been talking about leaving
early to go pro.

ANNOUNCER 2
He won't be talking much more. 1/11
from the field, 0/5 from the line
and two fouls. This raucous
Gainesville crowd --

CROWD (O.S.)
BOOOOO!!!!!!

ANNOUNCER 1
-- has never been more unanimous.

ANNOUNCER 2
They may lose, Chuck. Kentucky were
MASSIVE underdogs.

There it is: Viv's vitals SPIKE, bounding into quadrants of low-normal as the emergency chimes silence. Now the ventilator CHIRPS as Viv shows signs of BREATHING ON HER OWN.

DR. SHAH
She's overbreathing the ventilator.

She stirs. The clip ends. And her vitals dip once more.

DR. SHAH (CONT'D)
Hold on. And play it again!

Keller immediately scrubs back to the booing-est portion. Shah he bolts from the room. Keller looms over Viv. Her vitals spike and ebb in period with the boos. He tries:

DR. KELLER
(shitting the bed)
BOOO!!! FUCK BILL MORAN! HE SUCKS!

Nurses, doctors, other family members peek in. Shah wheels in a cart with a dust-feathered flatscreen from the breakroom with the help of two confused hospital techs, HDMI cable in hand, already searching and typing into his phone with his free hand as the techs sync the screen...as Shah recites the vintage play-by-play.

DR. SHAH
He won't be talking much more. 1/11
from the field, 0/5 from the line
and two fouls. This raucous
Gainesville crowd has never been
more unanimous.

No change. He loads the clip on his phone. Switches voices to the other announcer

DR. SHAH (CONT'D)
They may lose, Chuck. Kentucky were
MASSIVE underdogs. An upset nobody
talked about because people
generally speak on reality.

Plugging in and synching the AUX input through the remote. Trying to magnetize her health through the volume as he firmly presses down on the "+" as the terminals connect to the proper input, and the game floods the big screen at body-buckling decibels, scattering the ICU in its terrorism protocol. Shah and Keller stay on Viv's machine.

ON VITALS: they approach health once more. Shah and Keller watch Viv through the ear-lancing boos from the old telecast.

ANNOUNCER 2 (O.S.)
They may lose, Chuck. Kentucky were
MASSIVE underdogs. An upset nobody
talked about because people
generally speak on reality.

And despite the loud, looping hate for Bill, the vitals teeter and fall away, until she's in the condition she started with. And then less of that. Keller PUNCHES his shoulder. Shah the green face of loss. The loss of a miracle.

DR. KELLER

I should've seen it sooner.

Shah weeps for a moment, and then is slowly reanimated by the downwardness that defined his Oncology practice.

DR. SHAH

I'll text Britta once more.

CLOSE ON VIV and her far-between blips. As alive as a ventilator can be.

DR. SHAH (CONT'D)

Then we gotta go by the DNR...

INT. ICU ROOM - NIGHT

VIV babbling, stirring, agitating as the VENT TECH extubates her with the help of nurses. Mikaela watching her at the doorway. Keller holds Viv's hand as she rattles into death once the ventilator is completely unhooked.

Mikaela takes Keller's other hand, courageously watching her grandma's bulging, spherical eyes. Viv points to the wall at her feet like she sees a familiar face.

VIV

We can get those chickens we always wanted but never had the time for, William Moran Junior! Have ourselves the egg farm finally. Can you see it? Look at those ten-carat brown shells!

Britta listens at the room threshold. The techs and nurses wrap up. Viv reaching out to grasp at what seems to be her awareness of Britta. Britta flicks her off.

BRITTA

Oh NOW you wanna be with him?

Mikaela SHOVES BRITTA.

MIKAELA

Don't you dare.

Britta pays it no mind, watching as Viv cranes her arm to point at imaginary chickens.

VIV

The top row, the top right hen,
Eloise! She's coming with us, pick
her! Bill you'll love Eloise!

BRITTA

Just to forewarn you -- if you die
might finally be a...great mother.
Or at least better. Not sure you're
comfortable with that.

Keller and Shah keep Mikaela back from Britta. Viv points at another invisible egg.

VIV

And Darla, the poor thing. Doesn't
produce much, but Bill you love
your feta omelets.

BRITTA

(smiling)

I'm sorry -- am I making this about
me at the end of you?

VIV

Darla's an omelet birdie for sure.
Eggs for kings.

Britta displays her right arm to Viv: underneath the watch are several regular WRIST SCARS - suicide attempts.

BRITTA

It was always about you at the end
of me!

VIV

Anybody who eats one of Darla's
becomes a king!

Britta RUBS her wrist scars into Viv's forehead. Viv mumbles, tries to evade the smothering as Britta's pulled back by Keller. She SPITS ON VIV. Britta steps to the other side of the room.

Viv now has tears in her eyes. But not from the attack.

VIV (CONT'D)

Six acres and an orchard outside of
Statesboro, Georgia. Where we met.

Mikaela picking up a pen as she stares intently at her mother. Shah calmly touches down Mikaela's hand.

VIV (CONT'D)

Where we promised to go back, find the barn, hold each other like the first night we told ourselves "it doesn't get any better...than having your other keep their hand on your heart, and then take you around the world by it, then come right back to where you're safe, where everything around you from the hay to these birds I'm bringing, seems to say: 'I know you've got Bill and he's got you, but please let us know if we can make you any safer!'"

Viv turns to an empty space beside Britta.

VIV (CONT'D)

BILL! You're here??!
(to Britta)
Quick girl! Please - that one right beside you.

Britta finds herself picking it up, holding it in front of her. Viv STRAINING TO GET IT, her hand snapping like a crab claw. Britta speaks quietly to herself. Injuring herself with what comes up.

BRITTA

Daddy, I'm lying here.

Britta YANKS THE IMAGINARY EGG OUT OF VIV'S REACH. Mikaela and Keller gawk.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

(to Viv)
If he's in Heaven, it's with someone else.

Viv now writhing for that egg.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

You're not even allowed in the barn with these! Wanna know why?

Viv follows as BRITTA HURLS THE IMAGINARY EGG ACROSS THE ROOM. Mikaela aghast. Britta looks back at Viv, still pining for it. But weaker, weakening. Indeed dying. And Britta, sobbing as she notices, is unable to see her off.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

It's because he's a *cheating*,
terminally-entitled, self-made
monster who couldn't love anybody
beneath him. And everybody was.

Britta noticing as Viv withdraws her egg effort: hand drops,
head eases onto the pillow.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

Don't you dare chase after that
bare, causeless flagpole of man!

Viv's breath deepens, welcomes life.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

He's something to fall from. Not
climb. Nobody.

Britta's face prunes, molested by the lie.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

The opposite of you. FUCK HIM AND
FUCK WANTING TO GET TO HIM.

Viv's body relaxes.

Mikaela re-enters, plows past Britta for a closer look at
Viv: eyes open, now impartially watching the Heaven she'd
just been arguing with. Britta also noticing the improvement.

Mikaela grips Britta's shoulder -- gratitude? -- and YANKS
her back. Britta ignores-- she and everyone else preoccupied
with Viv's belly taking in and putting out life, her turn to
be a ventilator as she guides our moods like a metronome.

Shah collapses in supplication at Viv's bedside. Stares at
Britta. Understanding the treatment.

INT. SHAH ESTATE BEDROOM - NIGHT

NPR on television, box-filled bed overlooking a magnificent
lake. Shah -- silver stubble sprouting on his face -- emerges
from his walk-in closet holding the long green flow of fabric
that is a turban when tied. He sets it on the bed beside the
GURU GRANTH SAHIB -- the Sikh holy text -- which floats on
the top of an opened box labeled BOOKS.

DR. KELLER (O.S.)

Not knowing the truth can also kill
people.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - MORNING

Keller and Shah over coffee. Keller trying not to be distracted by the pomp and circumstance of Shah's new green turban. Tense. Shah sips.

DR. SHAH

When Britta defends her father to her mother, her mother is dying of cancer. When Britta does not defend her father, her mother does not have cancer.

DR. KELLER

She also becomes a monster.

DR. SHAH

I'm an Oncologist. I treat cancer.

DR. KELLER

I'm a Neurologist. I watch secrets that could solve entire family trees, battles, myths, lost around the clock to the ether. To "mmmmmm....mmmmmm...."

Shah's eyes like those of a reverend touting the promise of brimstone.

DR. SHAH

When Britta defends her father to her mother, her mother is dying of cancer. When Britta does not defend her father, her mother does not have cancer. I'm an Oncologist. I treat cancer.

DR. KELLER

I saw a dementia patient's son kill himself because he was never reassured that his ailing father loved him. By that point in dementia, all the son heard when he pressed the issue was "I always loved...I always loved...I always loved *that I can't remember.*"

DR. SHAH

I'm an Oncologist. I treat cancer.
When Britta defends-

DR. KELLER

I saw the father seep all the way down into that unrecoverable dimension of beta amyloid plaques that don't give a shit about anyone, as his fucked-up hardware tried in vain to reboot his dissolving being. I saw the love that I knew was always there go unsaid into the one-way night. And I saw the son, therefore unloved, in a casket before his father.

DR. SHAH

There isn't a book called THE EMPEROR OF ALL MALADIES because cancer is an anxiety disorder stemming from unresolved mommy issues.

DR. KELLER

You also can't pump Carboplatin into Dr. Moran's childhood and expect improvement.

DR. SHAH

You have no idea how lucky it is to find even enough beauty in this disease to heal *one*! It's complex, insidious, shape-shifting and skull-fucking.

Keller heating up.

DR. KELLER

I suppose the human condition is none of those things.

DR. SHAH

Praise be to God that in Mrs. Moran a human condition was returned to us.

DR. KELLER

Where were you born?

DR. SHAH

This is clinical medicine using evidence we produced.

DR. KELLER

Chandigarh, right?

DR. SHAH

She can talk to you, or anybody else instead of her mother.

DR. KELLER

What was it like, spending your childhood in Chandigarh in a shoebox, reading chemistry books while others played and developed humanity?

Shah watches Keller with fascination. He nearly laughs.

DR. SHAH

Do you honestly think most oncologists remember being children?

INT. BRITTA'S HOUSE - MORNING

ON PATIO

Viv and Mikaela in a game of pool. Viv is of course without any signs that she was ever sick, Mikaela without any signs that life was ever hard.

Shah and Britta watch through a window over coffee at the kitchen island. Britta propped up with a smile. She takes a sip of her coffee. Chuckles at the news -- we're doctors, right? -- even as she affirms it. Cracks beneath it.

BRITTA

So my mother's treatment - at the time I have the most questions - is that I have to walk on eggshells.

DR. SHAH

I wish I could've kept my wife alive by telling her that her father was terrible.

BRITTA

My Dad was the best thing to happen to me.

Shah sniffs the air as Britta's breath hits him.

DR. SHAH

Dr. Moran- there's more than one way to skin a past.

Britta stays on her family as best she can.

BRITTA'S POV

Mikaela whispering something down to Viv.

DR. SHAH (CONT'D)
I will turn my mission to getting
you and your daughter the best
counseling for the rest of your
lives for free.

As Britta sets her mug down Shah sees BOURBON inside.

BRITTA
Okay.

EXT. PATIO - MORNING

The pool game continues.

MIKAELA
Why has there always been a
distance between Doc and me? No
matter what?

VIV
You sure?

Mikaela nods. Viv sets her cue down. Huddles up to reply.

VIV (CONT'D)
In medical school she called you
her niece.

Mikaela bows the pool cue in her hands. She can't snap it.
Viv takes it.

VIV (CONT'D)
She was embarrassed to have a half-
black baby out of wedlock, and that
her professors, or anybody,
wouldn't take her seriously if they
knew. You saw her once every few
months up to her residency. Then
once Chuck's mom got sick, more.

Mikaela fumes, gasps as she tries to hold down tears.

VIV (CONT'D)

Ah ah, now now -- let me be specific about the appearances of kindness you got from her that helped you fail to understand what love should have been: what she loves is what you do for her.

(shaking her head)

She loves onlookers to study you as the case for her genes that she wasn't. *"Oh, Mikaela is great. Therefore maybe Britta would have been great if only the codes in her blood had lined up the right way. Maybe she was great.*

Viv hugs Mikaela. Both sickened.

VIV (CONT'D)

Maybe we forgot. No.

Viv runs soothing fingers up through Mikaela's hair.

VIV (CONT'D)

You were just left to fend for yourself in the bog of a narcissist.

Mikaela agrees.

VIV (CONT'D)

I brought up her suicide because it makes her a creature, which is easier to pity than it is to pity an evil mother. We've all got some creature in us -- some limit we can't take credit for. But she's mostly creature.

MIKAELA

Is it true?

Britta watches and appreciates what these two can have. Even the angry stare they both direct back at her. Shah senses what Britta ignores. Turns away.

VIV

You tell me if it's true.

Mikaela sharpens her gaze at Britta.

VIV (CONT'D)

No wonder I love you.

She nods, toasts Britta with her protein shake.

VIV (CONT'D)

We share the same resentment.

Britta reciprocates the toast with her mugs while Shah stands, scooting his chair in. Sulking in his human moment before exiting.

INT. MORAN MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mikaela and Britta tolerating each other waiting for the master bathroom door to OPEN. Viv springs forth in her COSTUME FROM THE NIGHT WE SAW HER SINGING, wig and all. Gives a twirl. Mikaela WHOOTS.

MIKAELA

Daaaaamn Grand-Viv! Contract killer outfit right there!

Britta's smile frosts, whipsawed between admiring the raucous beauty of her mother's outfit and...almost remembering it.

INT. CAYENNE - DAY

Britta sits up front as Viv and Mikaela pile into the back.

MIKAELA

I'm glad I'm not a jock.

VIV

You know what happens to most jocks at powerhouse schools? They stay jocks their whole lives.

BRITTA

Gabrielle Reece and Misty-May Treanor have made millions by starting as jocks.

Viv and Mikaela noticing that the wind has farted. The wind looks back at the road, drives.

VIV

Even as first-team All-State, *you were never a jock*. You've always had more important things to tell the world than "I'm going pro, just watch." And someday it won't be just you telling the world how a piece of it works.

(MORE)

VIV (CONT'D)

It'll be the Nobel committee,
talking you back to you as they
explain why they're inviting you to
Stockholm.

(beat)

Maybe for your work on inhabiting
exoplanets. Maybe you crack it with
an archaic Italian technology,
hidden for years until you
concluded it back to life.

Viv imagines the possibilities on the sunset.

VIV (CONT'D)

The thoughts of Mikaela Robinson,
high-fashion ideas that everyone
can afford.

(beat)

I want you to apply to Harvard.

CLOSE ON THE WIND, which also wanted to go to Harvard.

MUTATE TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE as CYRIL (60s, Jerry Garcia in a sport
coat) takes the stage, urging down the applause. Mikaela
adores within the crowd. Britta stands alone at the back,
disoriented - just her and a beer.

CYRIL THE BAR OWNER

It's a special thing when our
regulars stay regular. But what
about when they become *irregular*?
When they come back from 99.9999%
illness, to remind us of all the
possibilities? Ladies and
gentlemen: Viv Moran's husband --
(cheers.. "BILL!")
-- may be with the Lord, but *she*
was the one the Lord called up for
an autograph --
(louder cheers)
-- and now she's back...SINGING HIM
FORTH!

Viv ascends the stage.

CYRIL THE BAR OWNER (CONT'D)

Look west, to VIVIENNE EASTWOOD!

CROWD

That's VIV MORAN?! She looks
AMAZING!!! JUST LOOK AT HER!

VIV

This is a song I wish my mother
wrote about me. She only spoke
about two verses to me my whole
life. So -- two more verses.

The guitar strums. Mikaela captivated. Viv inhales.

VIV (CONT'D)

*I lost my girl in aisle three: the
toys. I told her she's too big for
toys, even as she shrank. I'll
never get her back. Her biggest
mistake is she listened to me.*

Britta tries to connect.

VIV (CONT'D)

*I saw her once in aisle four: the
boys. I told her she's too big for
boys, even as he bought her toys.
Away from me she shrank. She's
never coming back. Her biggest
mistake is she listened at all.*

Viv sets the mike down. The crowd applaud.

VIV (CONT'D)

(pointing, waving at
Mikaela)

That's my granddaughter.

Something winds her.

VIV (CONT'D)

In this moment I recognize that
it's also the song I wish her
mother had written about her.

The crowd yields aggressive, heartfelt approbation. Britta
overcome with rage. REMEMBERING.

VIV (CONT'D)

She's got big decisions on college
coming up.

Britta closing in. Viv notices the hostility.

VIV (CONT'D)
 (on Britta)
 Don't let that **cunt** near my stage!

Britta sucker punched by it. Cyril horrified.

VIV(CONT'D)
 Nobody called for whatever the
 opposite of a janitor is!

People gawk at Britta, trying to infer the drama beneath the misery. Mikaela looks back at her mother, impartial to it.

VIV (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Mikaela...

Mikaela glows at grandma's voice. Britta now very removed from the front-loaded crowd, moving to where she was with Howell, among the bussers and cooks closing up. Viv serious.

VIV (CONT'D)
 You were born to jump. And once you
 really do, you will not be bound by
 a metaphor. You will jump above
 volleyball. It will be in your past
 with your mother, with gravity.
 (in tears)
 Don't look back here. Soar.

Britta a dot in the rear, drinking herself into another identity at the old seat. Looking around. Viv coils, preparing to jump.

VIV (CONT'D)
 M-I-K-A-E-L-A SOAR!

Viv leaping from the stage. Britta charges toward them, but she's immediately entangled in a crowd trying to engage Viv and Mikaela, even as they embrace. Viv kisses her forehead and holds her.

BRITTA
 PEBBLES JUNIOR!!

Of course Mikaela doesn't hear. DELL THE DRUNK (60s, tall, crooked) takes the microphone.

DELL THE DRUNK
 Anybody here remember when Bill and
 George Foreman traded punches?

CROWD
 OHHHHH YEAH!!!!

DELL THE DRUNK

Foreman was visiting for a sermon, and got a hold of Bill. They got drunk on University and showed up at Foreman's friend's house. Jim Murray had the biggest slaughterhouse in Williston. Jim was sauced too, said "hey boys: why don't you help save me some electricity?" And they lined some heifers up in a field -- and those boys began -

(imitating the punch)

- BAP!- using their fists INSTEAD OF THE DAMN SLAUGHTERHOUSE!

Britta trying to get in a word as people LAUGH at Dell's DEPICTION OF THE PUNCHES. Shoves people to the side, but they're all insensate with Viv fever.

DELL THE DRUNK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

GEORGE HAD TO STOP AT SIX -- he was getting winded, punches lost their mustard and he KEPT NOT KILLING THEM!

The mob in cackles, dithyrambs. Britta spins around, mutilated by the noise.

DELL THE DRUNK (CONT'D)

Jim had to bring the CATTLE GUN INTO THE DAMN FIELD! BUT BILL'S... BILL'S KEPT ON DYING! BEEF UPON BEEF.

Viv and Mikaela are mobbed by fans. Somebody presenting Mikaela with a GAINESVILLE HIGH VOLLEYBALL HAT. Grandma and granddaughter take turns signing.

BRITTA

(to Dell, who can't hear)

Excuse me. EXCUSE ME!

Britta watches the autographs. Redoubles her effort, trying to SWIM OVER PEOPLE. The crowd, without knowing it, rejects her like an unclever disease, pushing her back to where she started.

DELL THE DRUNK

FORGET A SKY HOOK- - DID BILL EVER HAVE THE STRONGEST LEFT HOOK GEORGE FOREMAN EVER SAW! SO THE MAN WITH THE GRILL WILL TELL YOU TO THIS DAY!

(MORE)

DELL THE DRUNK (CONT'D)
 IN FACT IT'S HOW HE GOT THE IDEA TO
 GRILL: HE NEEDED A WAY TO COOK ALL
 THE BEEF FROM BILL'S HAND!
 (punching)
 BAP! BAP! BAP!

CROWD (O.S.)
 Yessir. Oh yes! That's the Bill I
 remember! Ain't that the truth! Ol'
 Moran Tower, that's who he was!

BRITTA
 SHUT THE FUCK UP!

She realizes the futility as her depleted arms stop the swim.
 She lands back at her table like washed-up flotsam.

Britta stumbles as she maneuvers her chair away from the
 crowd, sits, now facing the jukebox and the kitchen as her
 memory slowly populates, and she's now drinking the backwash
 and half-finished beers that have yet to be bused, and *she* is
 bused into the recall of a nightmare that has not just
 repeated, but doubled.

CLOSE IN BRITTA'S GOLDEN BEER SWILL.

DELL THE DRUNK (O.S.)
 If anyone asks who had the hardest
 punch of the Seventies, it wasn't
 George Foreman. Not even close!
 Bill Moran could kill anything
 forever!

She sobs into the gaslight in her cup.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. KELLER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

ON BRITTA, a switched-off automaton. Keller stares at her.

DR. KELLER
 She wouldn't last in counseling.

BRITTA
 She'd give the world stents.

DR. KELLER
 Which is more serious: "You have
 cancer."
 (beat)
 Or "**Who are you?**"

BRITTA

She doesn't have much time left
when I ask questions.

DR. KELLER

What if you found out that you
don't need to be compared to him
anymore, because the man you were
compared to never existed in the
first place?

BRITTA

I can see a therapist for all that
after she dies.

DR. KELLER

When she's vile, her health is 30
years better than yours.
(staring at Britta,
getting no healthier)
31..32...33.

BRITTA

The truth is in the middle.

DR. KELLER

Not in the middle of a therapist.
So how do you find *hers*, when she's
between a story of good and a story
of evil?

Britta thinks about this. And sheds like a deciduous person.

BRITTA

It's the point she was torn in two.

DR. KELLER

That's how we treat Dissociative
Identity Disorder: we find a middle
among roles, like a conference
table, and encourage it to be a
safe place. That way everyone has a
voice. Sometimes it's between two
voices, sometimes between forty-
two. But I've never seen it with
one voice dying.

BRITTA

Dead, basically. Who's to say
they'll survive together? Or will
she be half-dying?

DR. KELLER

Your time is worth as much as hers.
You know she's not giving a fuck
about you right now.

Britta shakes her head.

DR. KELLER (CONT'D)

Where was she torn?

BRITTA

Here. Gainesville.

DR. KELLER

And *when*?

BRITTA

When he was at his greatest. I had
just been born. Therefore she was
at her least.

DR. KELLER

There was an experiment -- never
replicated -- done by a Social
Psychologist at Harvard named Ellen
Langer. She took several senior men
and women to a cabin set up to be
in 1959, when they would have been
in the primes of their lives. They
had to haul their own bags, perform
chores that their young bodies were
assumed to perform. They were
required to talk only about the
events, feelings and dynamics of
the day. No past tense. All that
was allowed -- Castro, Alaska,
Ernie Banks, Cadillacs and getting
laid -- was from '59, and '59 was
the patent present. They had to
think in the year, move without
time, be without thoughts of age. A
Buddhist's life of gerunds.

(beat)

Care to guess what happened to the
subjects by the end?

INSERT SERIES OF SHOTS

1. Morning forest light scattering across Bill's pickup,
GROANING in first gear as Britta pulls on the AIRSTREAM, its
long-deflated tires and entanglement in eons of woodland
debris doing what they can to stay past. Eventually the
pickup YANKS IT FORTH and escapes.

2. Britta at her old house watching home videos of newborn Britta inside the family dorm she was born into. A stack of memorabilia and framed photos by her side. She takes notes. Takes pictures on her phone. Glues pieces of memorabilia back together, items Viv had destroyed in the garage.

3. Britta assembling the trailer based on her notes. Looking more and more like the apartment we remember from the flashback, the shrine to Bill Moran.

4. The truck and trailer pulled up to the ABANDONED SMITH FARM. Seeing Britta emerge from workshop with a piece of LATHE WORK.

INTERRUPT MONTAGE -

INT. KELLER'S OFFICE - DAY

BRITTA

They felt a little more like they did back then.

DR. KELLER

The "Counterclockwise" experiment. Blood pressures lowered, arthritis pain improved, wheelchairs were scrapped, libidos unearthed. Tock tick, tock tick...and so on..until what they were replaced what they remembered, and they were once more living beyond the shadow of a clock tower.

BRITTA

When we're younger: more moments, fewer ideas about them. No wonder we're healthier.

DR. KELLER

From their belief in the *time*. Now imagine solving not for only time, but *place*. Reactions to the signals given off by setting alone.

Britta getting it in spades.

DR. KELLER (CONT'D)

Combine it with an event in that setting...

BRITTA

The dorms.

DR. KELLER

And you stop treating the symptoms of only time, the degenerative conditions, and start also treating the *symptoms of place*. Specifically, where your mom would begin to inhabit two places out of safety. Or survival.

6. Britta combing through Bill's closet. Unearthing memorabilia, signed pictures, gear from his stint in the NBA with the Philadelphia 76ers. She notices a taped cardboard box at the bottom of a sock bin. Address label scratched out. Postmark is not: PHILADELPHIA, PA. She opens it. Uncovers a shrinkwrapped bottle of DRAKKAR NOIR COLOGNE, a tag in flowery cursive reads "TO B, FROM T."

DR. KELLER (V.O.)

When one whole, no-longer-habitable pain split into two half-truths.

BRITTA

You think half of her truth has cancer?

Keller's eyes already triaging the process for this.

DR. KELLER

Sometimes.

(beat)

I think she comes back to life because she has something to set straight. I wonder if, deep down, she's too angry to die.

BRITTA

Healthy anger.

DR. KELLER

Go in there and find out. When half a truth encounters the other half: think chemistry. It might become something else.

7. Britta back in Bill's closet-- she gets up, hiding the cologne in her shirt. Walks out.

8. Britta sniffs from the bottle of DRAKKAR NOIR cologne, her face prunes as she shoves it back, remembering Daddy. She wrathfully imbues the FINISHED TRAILER by spraying half the bottle. She sets what remains on the old television set. As she exits, she faces her (re)creation.

CLOSE ON BRITTA, watching at the doorway the HAZY MEMORY OF WHAT WE FIRST SAW as Viv's at the dorm: Tiny Britta seated on Bill's lap. CLOSE ON THE TELEVISION SET, showing THE FLINTSTONES. PEBBLES.

Tiny Britta gazing upon good-humored Bill as he watches the Flintstones while Viv, bulletproof with a marquee for a smile, brings over a plate of peanut buttered crackers. CLOSE on Tiny Britta and her twinkle, watching her mother as she offers the plate to Bill.

FRED FLINSTONE (O.S.)
WIIIIIIILMAAAAAA!!!!

INT. BILL'S TRUCK - MOVING - DAY

CLOSE ON ADULT BRITTA as she hauls, AIRSTREAM HUMMING behind ON FRESH NEW TIRES as an autoshop fades behind.

INT. HALLWAY AT BRITTA'S HOUSE - DAY

MIKAELA
You sure it's okay, Grandma Viv?
(shushing someone OS)
It's cool.

Viv studies Mikaela - in a bikini top and shorts - next to the granite, handsome FRANK (18, swim trunks), who fidgets.

VIV
You all know about being safe?

Mikaela upon Viv. She knows she does. Viv places a hand on Franks's shoulder without losing sight of her granddaughter.

VIV (CONT'D)
In this era of the future: of
websites, nostril cameras and super
porn?

Frank and Mikaela laugh, then laugh harder as Viv maintains her self-aware deadpan.

EXT. BRITTA'S HOUSE - DAY

Pickup with Airstream parked in the street in front.

INT. HALLWAY AT BRITTA'S HOUSE - DAY

Viv watches the unshackled youth glowing from her approval. She fans into a wide smile as the kids shut the door and she's SNATCHED INTO A HEADLOCK BY BRITTA.

The kids return to the hallway at the sound of Viv's VULGAR STRUGGLE, but Britta's already dragged her halfway down the stairs with the ease of an apex predator.

Viv's legs drag over the steps but Britta maintains her headlock. Viv attempts to pry herself from the grasp as Britta rockets through the wide-open front door. She can only WHEEZE, nothing else can get through on the way to the

AIRSTREAM

MIKAELA BOUNDING DOWN THE STAIRS IN EASY PURSUIT. Shrieking at the sight of Viv HEADLOCKED, HURRIED TOWARD THE TRAILER.

MIKAELA
STOP IT!!!!

Britta ignores as Viv KICKS. Frank joins, stares -- the scene's perversity diminishing him of agency.

MIKAELA (CONT'D)
STOP!!!

- but he finally goes after Britta, who maneuvers her mother with one arm as she works on opening the door with her free arm.

INT. AIRSTREAM - DAY

Perfect replica of the memory. Rocked as Viv CLAWS FOR LEVERAGE AS SHE'S SLAMMED REPEATEDLY AGAINST THE OUTSIDE. WE HEAR THE SCRAPING OF THE WARPED DOOR BEING FORCED OPEN.

IT CRACKS AN INCH, scattering unholy daylight onto the past.

MIKAELA (O.S.)
STOP!!!!!!

And so it's stopped.

EXT. BRITTA'S HOUSE - DAY

Viv pried away from hellbent Britta by Frank, who splits them. Viv gasps for air, doubled-over. But seems OK. Mikaela runs to her, checks her out as best a high school kid can. Britta senses what Mikaela and Viv have. Lays down her arms.

VIV

Should I call 9-1-1 or do you know any new cops? I know plenty that have retired.

MIKAELA

Frank's Dad's a cop. Why's there ALWAYS a problem with something, huh....

Mikaela focuses on her mother.

MIKAELA (CONT'D)

Auntie Britta?

Britta's charged up.

BRITTA

Auntie?!?!

VIV

(sarcastic, recovering)

Oh come on now: surely she could be your mother! Look at how well she treats her own! "Show me to my trailer, Mr. Mankiewicz!"

BRITTA

AUNTIE!!!?!?!?!?

MIKAELA

Or do you prefer "doctor who plays a mother on TV?"

Britta takes her keys, unhooks a HOUSE KEY.

MIKAELA (CONT'D)

Just because you didn't enjoy your childhood...

(beat)

I'm not gonna tell you you did anything right just because you tried to kill yourself.

VIV

You think any woman in this family-like arrangement hasn't thought about doing it?

Mikaela nods. Britta hands Mikaela the key to the home.

EXT. HOSPITAL CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The sign for the grief meeting flanked by a few hospital workers we recognize from the meeting before -- worried, checking their watches.

FADE TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Doctors numerous and attentive look ahead, the closest this crowd will ever get to resembling mass. No chit-chat. Just unanimous fascination as they leaf through the scans, labs, plots and other metrics for a patient whose personal information has been BLACKED OUT.

An image of CA JOURNAL projected on a screen: Cover article title has VIV's fMRI scans, reads: "Behavioral Modifications as Determinants in Sustained Remission of Small Cell Lung Cancer."

Shah - silver mane of a beard beneath his turban - preens at a lectern.

DR. SHAH

The six sets of scans and labs in front of you are from the same rumored woman. Two hours apart. Then after a regression, another set. Then six weeks later, a year later and two years later. Biological Summer and Winter. The "healthy" chemistry seeming to conjure an angrier, more confrontational person.

Someone raises their hand as Shah is speaking.

DR. SHAH (CONT'D)

Yes?

(listening to what we
can't hear well)

She is physiologically more efficient hating her dead husband, which as scientists unlucky enough to not be her, is about as far as we can limn the truth about her truth. We could say the body doesn't do well to lie. Especially as time battens down, overhead and underfoot.

(another question)

I - yes.

(MORE)

DR. SHAH (CONT'D)

Her cancer seems to care about
certain thoughts more than others.
Who treats it?

(beat)

Well, I read Freud on the toilet
during my Hematology blocks at
Yale. But I think what is binding
her disease seems to be a psychic
construct: the simultaneity of love
and hate. You have per se two
"dissociated identities," according
to the fMRI: where one is
"borderline" with hate, which then
switches in response to the other,
which is massively ill with late-
stage bronchogenic disease with
love. And vice versa. If she wasn't
sick, then I'd suppose this one's
for Psychology.

(beat)

Heaven forbid the patient decides
it was all a dream.

Everyone LAUGHS. Shah most of all. Neck-deep in his faith.

EXT. MORAN RESIDENCE - DAY

Britta 2.0 - jaundiced, overweight, edematous, cirrhotic,
undocorly, alone - shouldering a cell phone as she climbs
through the junk-filled garage. She barely fits into her
white tee, sandals and athletic shorts, varicose veins a map
to where she's sunk.

BRITTA

Italian is good.

She sidesteps front yard overgrowth with an overstuffed trash
bag. The shrine to Bill has been subjected to the same
abandon, items now suspended in weeds like forgotten spider
prey.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

Is she flying out of Logan? I'll
pick her up.

(beat)

You'll pick her up.

Britta steps into her Porsche in the driveway. Reveal next to
it and nearly peeking into the road is BILL'S TRUCK WITH THE
AIRSTREAM STILL HITCHED TO IT. Britta starts the car. It
WHINES, belches the smoke of an ignored "maintain engine"
light.

BRITTA (CONT'D)
My car's dead anyway.

EXT. MORAN RESIDENCE - LATER

The family disembark a LEXUS to meet Britta, who looks like a ward of the state by comparison. Mikaela, a collegian beauty in preppy winter wear, Harvard beanie, stands with Frank. They are scintillating together. Viv in stellar, counterclockwise health: she has long lustrous brown hair, wears a yellow tee featuring THE BRIDE from KILL BILL. Holding hands with her yogi girlfriend, ASHLEY (50s). They hover in the driveway. Strangers with name tags.

BRITTA
How are you?

MIKAELA
Good. You?

And that's that.

BRITTA
I'm here. How are you, Viv?

Ashley reaches her hand out.

ASHLEY
Ashley.

BRITTA
Britta.

ASHLEY
Pleasure.

It's like the fight happened yesterday. No sympathy or cognizance about Britta's deterioration. Viv doesn't even seem to notice Bill's entangled memorabilia. Britta looks at the OLD BIRTHDAY CARD among it.

BRITTA
Today is-

VIV
Did you have a restaurant in mind?

ASHLEY
Spato's is generic, inoffensive.

Viv's CELL PHONE RINGS. She answers, distances herself as she rues answering.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
 Did you give your Dad a list of
 plays? He can fly with you --

MIKAELA
 (grin ear-to-ear)
 -- we're seeing Broadway in March.

Britta's hands shake uncontrollably as she mumbles --

ASHLEY
 Are you okay?

-- trying to slip something in edgewise to Mikaela.

BRITTA
 (pathetic, despairing)
What are you studying?!?!

Mikaela turns away with revulsion as Frank considers Britta. He holds his hand out -- not to help, but to make sense of Britta, who immediately SNATCHES the hand, squeezing for dear love. As he allows it, the shaking diminishes.

Mikaela watches unmoved.

Britta breaks away rather suddenly, fingers inside her pocket, impressing a SMALL LIQUOR BOTTLE against the shorts fabric as she shakes. Empty. She points at the garage like people care.

BRITTA (CONT'D)
 Gotta grab something.

Britta plods toward it. As she passes the pickup we see in the background VIV'S MOTIONLESS BACK TO US, STANDING AT THE OPEN AIRSTREAM DOOR, LOOKING IN.

INT. AIRSTREAM - MORNING

Viv at the threshold, peering inside at who she was. Long, controlling breaths as she she spots the Drakkar Noir on the television set. She enters. Sprays the air.

Her nose twitches. Skin floods with the hues of iron and war.

She winds up to punch as her tight lips and gritted teeth mutter malediction, holding the pose as she sails across the room, a cobra coiling to strike any of the the hundred prey items distributed here. The tight-cocked fist shakes as it passes an old BASKETBALL CALENDAR featuring Bill in the month of March. She passes their framed WEDDING PHOTO.

She buzzes from artifact to artifact, pollinating the past with a flinching smile expired of the pleasantries it was forged in: A CHAMPIONSHIP BANNER AT THE BACK; A TROPHY SHELF; A FRAMED JERSEY; THE KITCHENETTE; THE COUCH; TV; THE LATHE WORK: FLINSTONES VHS CARTOONS.

By the end of her tour Viv is vibrating so violently that she resembles a red cloud. The Airstream bows as a shadow passes over her -- AND SHE ASSAILS THE SKY WITH HER FISTS, PUMMELING THE CULPRIT HIGH ABOVE HER. We hear the smacks as they connect.

And halt.

VIV

Bill.

It's Britta. Pathetic. Listless

No reaction to having been pummeled-- or the blooming welts. She steps DOWN INTO THE TRAILER from the stoop. She leans into the wall to support herself. Barely aware she's here.

Viv realizing what she's done, steps back reflexively. Accruing horror.

It's compounded when Mikaela emerges, steps up to investigate the space, having no clue about its origins. Britta's trembling hand tries to rub her face.

Viv continues backwards as guilt expands, taking in the panorama of two generations that have born the brunt of who she's been. She's tripped up by the couch, which she falls onto. It gives her a better view of her walking demise of a daughter and a contemptuous granddaughter who seems to sicken at the sight of her mom.

Viv scoots far left, beckons to her family. Britta sits next to her, then Mikaela gingerly beside Britta. Mikaela can't stomach it -- she stands immediately, urges Viv to the center so she can sit away from her mom. Now we take in THREE GENERATIONS OUT OF ORDER, OUT OF SORTS, SPLAYED ON THE COUCH FROM THE PAST.

Viv touches her cheeks as they grow wan. She wheezes. A wet cough emerges.

BRITTA

What is it?

VIV

I'm unforgivable.

The meaning of the phrase died years ago.

BRITTA

It's okay.

VIV

Did you hear what I just said?

BRITTA

I did. But I think on average we still probably love each other.

Viv elicits a very specific jollity that frightens Mikaela: a HIGH PITCHED YELP-LAUGH that we haven't heard before. Britta also pulled from her body squalor -- she's focusing on it.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

I haven't heard that -

VIV

- since you were two. You heard it a lot more at one-and-a-half. Even more at one. And if you could have heard in the womb...

(tearing up)

It would've been all you heard.

Britta tries an awkward reassuring hand to her Mom's shoulder. Viv bristles, gets sicker. Britta fashions a pathetic hug. But it doesn't stay pathetic as Viv is undone more so: crying, snotting rusted phlegm into Britta's shoulder, convulsing with penance and moral weakness.

VIV (CONT'D)

There's no medium for what I've done.

Mikaela totally confused.

VIV (CONT'D)

(getting wheezier)

I need either Pebbles to get the car.

BRITTA

I can't do a car now. I'm nauseous.

VIV

Not nearly enough.

(keeling over)

You both need to see this.

INT. LEXUS - MOVING - DAY

Viv in the passenger seat, writhing with chest pain, the prodromes of lung cancer. Mikaela driving. Signs for I-95 SOUTH DAYTONA. Viv adjusts a HEATING PAD OVER HER CHEST.

MIKAELA

How far?

Britta in the backseat. Her tremors have returned. Viv cranes up to have a look at the fuel status: nearly on "E."

VIV

Get gas.

INT. LEXUS - DAY - MOVING

Breaking over the water of JEWFISH CREEK, having left the Florida mainland. Tank almost empty again. Mikaela taking in the sights as she texts FRANK with her free hand.

BRITTA

You can't tell us where we're going besides off the curvature of the earth?

Viv MEWLS as the question's asked. Mikaela peacocks back at Britta, trying to intimidate.

MIKAELA

Would you just sit?

Viv glares at Mikaela. Rigs a shout from her mewl.

VIV

WOULD YOU SHOW SOME FUCKING RESPECT?!?

Mikaela BRAKES THE CAR OVER THE BRIDGE. Stares at Viv, sickness and all, who gives it right back. Mikaela submits, accelerates. CLOSE ON A SIGN reading WELCOME TO KEY LARGO.

VIV (CONT'D)

Two stoplights then a right.

Mikaela mouths "FUCK YOU."

EXT. KEY LARGO - DAY

The Lexus pulls into a gas station across from the brick squalor of JENSEN ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY: two stories, in-window AC units, set beside a multipurpose office building.

Viv pops out, and though unwell, Britta and Mikaela watch her sprint to the gasoline convenience store door, looking behind the whole time, then immediately BOOMERANGING the other way, toward the assisted living facility.

Viv stops in the street, blocking polite cars as she regards the building. She looks back at her family once more.

Walks in.

EXT. KEY LARGO - LATER - DAY

Britta emerges from the gas station, beer in hand. Watches the building, then her watch. Sees Mikaela, who sees her.

Britta shrugs. They agree.

INT. FACILITY - DAY

Government-subsidized, government-forgotten. Neutral walls thin the thin brown carpet.

Nurses in jeans guide abandoned residents around the hall. Britta and Mikaela approach central reception, where RACHEL (55, with a smile that forgot how to power off) attends to a logbook beneath an antiquated Dell desktop. Rachel nods at the party, expecting Britta.

RACHEL

Mr. Howard's daughter. No mistake!

(reading)

Is it 1049 SW 108th Street,
Gainesville, Florida, 32607?

BRITTA

For what?

RACHEL

She was just here to update the
billing. Tammy.

Rachel hands Britta a bill for "Managed Care": \$35,000.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

It's higher this month because Mr.
Howard has had evacuation issues.

Britta's shock threatens to destroy her drinking habit.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. In eighteen years here,
I saw her twice.

(MORE)

RACHEL (CONT'D)
 Never seen either of you.
 (beat)
 Do you want to see his chart?

Rachel gives Britta the CHART.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
 Tammy said you're a doctor? What kind?

She looks it over:

**Name Tom Howard, Birth Date 6/16/58, Admission Date 5/1/1984
 Height 6'11. Weight 224. Age 59.**

Diagnosis: Brain Stem Stroke. Secondary Diagnosis: LIS.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
 Were you and he estranged?

Mikaela smelling the unholiness of the situation.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
 Do you not want to see him?

Britta COLLAPSES.

INT. ROOM - DAY

From what we can see, a dorm. Blanketed feet overhang a thin twin mattress as THE 700 CLUB plays on a television. The door opens. Britta walks, ROLLING IV OF SALINE in her arm.

Reveal in TOM HOWARD, whom Britta recognizes immediately.

Bill. The nearly seven foot-tall tube of white now a frozen, shriveled mass of parenterally-fed bedsores and a tracheostomy tube. Frozen - indeed - but for aging. Beaten, padlocked eyes that only can look ahead reflect the scaphism endured from decades of being alone.

Britta's dead sight can't quite process it. She swallows, puts herself in his plane of view by tilting his head.

Bill's INDEX FINGER TWITCHES WILDLY. RACHEL'S FACE INDICATES IT'S NEVER HAPPENED. As Britta grasps it, Bill's locked beads for eyes -- which Britta hovers above so he fully sees -- fill with tears.

BRITTA
 Mikaela?!?!

EXT. FACILITY - DAY

Mikaela outside, head on a despairing swivel. Looking for Viv. Peers into the LEXUS across the street. She starts down the street, not giving up on the one who cared.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Bill gazing at Britta like a newborn in carbonite.

BRITTA
Why wasn't he given rehabilitation?

Rachel's permanent smile falters.

RACHEL
In eighteen years of work here, I
saw her twice.
(crying coming through)
He likes to watch sports programs.

FLASH BACK TO:

INT. MORAN RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Britta (14) and Viv eat RAMEN NOODLES on Thanksgiving placemats. Britta chippy with the nascent neuroses she'll grow into.

BRITTA
We're not poor, right?

VIV
Then what would this be?

BRITTA
Dad would have wanted us to go the
shelter. They bring in all these
birds for people.

Viv ABRUPTLY GETS UP. Darts into the garage and in a flash she's back with a 1982 PHILADELPHIA 76ERS VERSUS LOS ANGELES LAKERS PROGRAM. She slides it across to Britta.

VIV
Your Daddy would wrap us in his
vines for arms right now if he was
alive to see our resilience.
(beat)
(MORE)

VIV (CONT'D)

You know he fasted during Ramadan one season, so that he could go head-to-head with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar? Page 73. He had nine points in 37 minutes. One of the Hall of Famer's worst games ever happened while your Daddy was guarding him, starving.

(beat)

And here we are: starving.

Britta nods. Flips to page 73: KAREEM ABDUL-JABBAR OF THE LOS ANGELES LAKERS.

VIV (CONT'D)

Surviving.

(mouth full of ramen)

Will you be able to survive and starve at the same time on your own, when the time comes?

(takes another bite)

Britta visibly nervous, unsure of how to answer. Viv studying her daughter between slovenly chews.

VIV (CONT'D)

(muffled by Ramen)

Then maybe you're lucky he's dead.

BACK TO:

BRITTA GOING DOWN AN ITEMIZED BILL, SIMILAR NUMBERS ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE 1980S:

\$40,000...PAID; \$16,000...PAID; \$76,000...PAID

RACHEL

Are you wanting rehabilitation for him?

BRITTA

Yes.

Mikaela returns and Britta beckons her over to see Bill, whom she turns to see Mikaela. Mikaela immediately hides behind Rachel.

BRITTA (CONT'D)

Mikaela: come here.

She hesitates.

MIKAELA
I'm not white.

Britta begins to cry.

BRITTA
Mikaela: come here.

Mikaela pokes out. Curiosity combats fear. Inches closer.

BRITTA (CONT'D)
Meet Bill.

Mikaela closes on Bill. A step further: she is a child.
Britta adjusts Bill's sight-line to Mikaela.

A step more: a grandchild. Britta adjusts. Bill's imprisoned
features project upon the approaching girl.

MIKAELA
Hi, Grandpa. Heard a lot about you.

Bill's eyes show a slick of tears. Britta props his arm
toward Mikaela. Britta senses strength -- she moves away from
the arm. IT STAYS EXTENDED, allowing Bill's shaky hand to try
to touch Mikaela's.

Britta cleans away Bill's eye gunk as Mikaela's hand grasps
Bill's finger, which immediately stops twitching upon
contact.

FADE TO BLACK.