

DREAMS OF A DYING HEART

by
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BLACK.

THE CALL TO PRAYER sung in Arabic, somewhere in the distance. Haunting. Beautiful. It carries OVER...

FADE IN:

KARBALA, IRAQ

Minarets. White stucco. Desert. Fountains. Beauty and grand vistas. Then, an attack helicopter. Slow. The sound of its ROTOR chops out the call to prayer and carries over...

INT. ABANDONED BUILDING - KARBALA, IRAQ - DAY

CLOSE on a dead fan blowing intermittently in hole in the wall.

An old wall, twenty muddy colors, dim blue light from the fan hole.

We're in a cavernous room. Two ratty old straight back library chairs. Wooden. Paint splattered. One, empty.

On the other, a naked woman. We hear her frightened BREATHING.

That would be RACHEL WATSON, and this is her life. 35, still beautiful, but a bit beat up at the moment.

DOWN THROUGH THE CEILING FAN

Rachel's totally alone.

Her left thigh has a long coagulated gouge. She's dirty. She covers herself with herself.

ON RACHEL

Half her face is swollen and bloody. She's sweating. Terrified, but controlled.

RACHEL'S VOICE

I'll be honest with you, I never expected to get shot. At least not when and why I did. But then, life has this way of tricking you into things you never imagined.

A distant CLANG. Somebody YELLS in the corridor outside. Rachel quickens. A man. Pleading:

VOICE (IN ARABIC, SUBTITLED)
 If you pardon and forbear and
 forgive, then surely Allah is
 Forgiving, Merciful! The Koran!

Then footsteps, and a chain rattling through a hasp. Rachel
 breathes faster. Swallows. A HEARTBEAT.

THE DOOR

Fifteen feet behind Rachel. The lever begins to turn.

RACHEL

Looks up. Breathes. Then the sound of a SHOT -

B A N G !

BLACK.

Over the black, PIANO. Chopin's Ballad no 1 in G minor, the
 piece of passion.

FADE IN:

EXT. IRAQI DESERT - DAY

Extreme wide. Sky a painter would love. PIANO continues.

ON THE CAMEL-COLORED SAND

Traveling over it. Fast. A shadow. Then it's clear: the
 shadow of a UH-1 Huey helicopter. A thing of strange beauty.

ON THE CHOPPER

Flying toward Karbala. The air is painfully full of light.
 The buildings of the desert city of 300,000 stretch out
 ahead. Mud, brick, white-painted pillars and minarets.

IN THE CITY:

A DIRTY-CHEEKED BOY IN A FILTHY BRIGHT BLUE SHIRT stands in
 supersaturated relief against a building. He looks up and
 out toward the approaching chopper. The PIANO continues.

RACHEL'S VOICE
 Karbala. It was a support mission,
 that's what us women do.
 (MORE)

RACHEL'S VOICE (cont'd)
Run down to grab an Al Qaeda
suspect for interrogation up North.
But support don't mean what it used
to. Means help fight...

BACK ON THE CHOPPER:

Rachel's flying it. JOSEPH MILLER, 35 is her copilot.

RACHEL'S VOICE
When you're in harm's way, things
rarely go as planned. Gotta always
wonder, what am I missing, that's
gonna kill me? You get a little
tingle on the back of your neck,
you gotta pay attention...

THE BOY IN BLUE stares. We move in on him...until we see the
desert and the chopper reflected in his iris.

RACHEL'S VOICE
When you start taking fire you
realize how fragile it all is. How
we're all just, sacs, of pent up
hopes and dreams and fucked-upness.
And when one of those sacs
bursts...

REVERSE ANGLE:

The chopper approaching, then: chopper bubble BURSTS with the
sound of a SHOT, the PIANO music falters, the sounds of
SCREAMING AND COMMOTION, and a rush of embarrassing, petty
scenes from Rachel's so-called life fly out at us in a tidal
wave...

Rachel yelling at her daughter CLARA...

Rachel dancing and laughing...

Rachel as a girl in school with a blood stain suddenly in the
crotch of her white jeans...

Rachel, grease-blackened, working in a gas station garage...

RACHEL'S VOICE
...everything just rushes out in
this terrible mess. Terrible...

THE BOY IN BLUE turns away.

THE IMAGES soak into the dunes, which resolve into...

INT. RACHEL'S QUARTERS - DAY

...long camel muslin cloths, which sweep and billow over open windows. The PIANO picks up again, quietly.

Rachel and Joseph make love. She sees Joseph's helmet on the bed. Stuck inside, a photo of him and his wife MABEL. It rocks slightly and slips closer and closer to her face.

RACHEL'S VOICE

...This is my mess. Sorry mom.
It's not pretty.

LATER

Joseph lights a smoke. Rachel lies with her back to him.

JOSEPH

Rumor is they're gonna extend us
another four months.

Rachel stares at a small TV tuned to an armed forces station.

WE MOVE IN ON IT. The images are strange, moving too fast for real TV: the war in Iraq, the war in Afghanistan, Donald Rumsfeld irritably explaining to reporters how the Iraqi people will welcome US forces with open arms...

WE MOVE INTO THE IMAGES AND THEY BECOME REAL: Dancing and ambulances and floods and fighting in Palestine, a Hummer commercial and a televangelist preaching fire and brimstone and George Bush in front of MISSION ACCOMPLISHED. The Twin Towers coming down and Muslims protesting and Oprah and Dr Phil and Fear Factor and Darfur and smoke stacks and mushroom clouds and endangered species and boys with stringers of little fish and SUVs and boys with stinger rockets and sex and movies and poverty and guns in Haiti and polar ice falling into the ocean and ads ads ads... it runs faster and faster...the PIANO music climbing like a passionate fire...

RACHEL'S VOICE

So that's what I was thinking when
the bullet hit: not how'm I gonna
survive, but how'm I gonna clean up
this horrible mess. What a woman.
Hand me a god damn washcloth.

And it all shrinks and swirls away in a rush of blue water and suds... but the suds are clouds and the water oceans and we're pulling away from the whole stinking rat-infested, god damned, gorgeous, beautiful, heartbreaking blue world,

and it floats there in space,

and the piano piece hits its final echoing NOTE... BANG!

The world explodes towards us with the sound of a SHOT and goes white like we're in heaven, then crumbles into ash, and we're not. We're here:

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Rachel, in full dress uniform, JERKS in her sleep and gasps awake. One of those big, whole body jumps.

RACHEL

Jesus.

The SARGEANT next to her looks over.

SARGEANT

You were asleep.

RACHEL

Huh. Bad dream.

The guy goes back to his paper and Rachel rubs her face and looks out at the city below. It's raining in Milwaukee.

INT. AIRPORT CONCOURSE - DAY

In the airport concourse, Rachel limps amid silent returning reservists. Ahead, glass doors separate the secure area from baggage claim, which is decorated festively with a military welcoming committee. The doors slide apart and the reservists flow out into the crowd. But instead of celebrating, families fall into wordless embraces.

Rachel spies her husband, DAN, 35 and her daughter CLARA, 16, lithe and pretty, with straight metallic blue hair. Dan looks made-up and a bit schmarmy. They disappear in the sea of military hats. She finds them. On the periphery, TV news reporters move in.

Rachel drops her carry-on bags and holds her arms wide. Her eyes dampen as Dan comes to hug her.

RACHEL

Hey - Hey -

NEWS REPORTER (O.S.)

Is it her? Is that her?

They embrace. Rachel spies Clara over Dan's shoulder. Clara opens her plush lips in a soft smile as Rachel comes over.

RACHEL
 Hey-hey! Look at you! I didn't
 hardly recognize you! Eighteen
 months and you're a woman! And
 so... blue!

Clara's face keeps smiling, but her eyes show a little hurt.

NEWS REPORTER 4
 (from the periphery)
 I think that's her.

CAMERAMAN
 (from the periphery)
 We'll pick her up off the embrace.

Clara looks over Rachel's shoulder at Dan as Rachel hugs her.
 His eyes are clouded but he smiles and gives her the thumbs
 up. The reporters move in.

NEWS REPORTER 4
 How old is the daughter?

CAMERAMAN
 Sixteen.

NEWS REPORTER 5
 Get the daughter shame angle.
 Okay, let's roll.

Rachel steps back, still all about pride and power and worry
 with her daughter. Tries to shadow-box with Clara.

RACHEL
 Wow. Hey, come on, brown belt!

Clara puts her hands up half-heartedly. Suddenly, the camera
 crews surround them. Brilliant lights. Rachel's brow
 furrows. They gather their bags and move off. The reporters
 follow: questions, phallic mikes.

NEWS REPORTER 1
 Captain Watson, can you tell us
 anything about the tragedy you're
 accused of -

RACHEL
 No comment.

Clara's red and a bit confused. Reporter 5 flanks her.

NEWS REPORTER 5
 Claire Watson, can you tell us how
 it feels to have your mother
 accused -

NEWS REPORTER 4

Do you intend to mount some kind of defense strategy -

NEWS REPORTER 2

Captain Watson, as the first woman to face possible court martial for cowardice on the battlefield, do you have any comment?

RACHEL

(stopping, exasperated)

Hey. Women run support. And I wasn't on a damn battlefield.

Several flash bulbs go off.

DAN

(hand up)

Come on come on come on come on come on.

He drags her away.

OUTSIDE

Protestors wave signs OUT OF IRAQ NOW and SUPPORT OUR TROOPS - BRING THEM HOME and PEACE and WELCOME HOME. One voice rises above the din.

FEMALE PROTESTOR

Thank you! Thank you for your service!

Another group waves signs saying GOD IS PUNISHING US FOR TOLERATING GAYS and COURT MARSHALL RACHEL WATSON.

PROTESTORS

Court martial! Court martial!
You're a terrorist!

Dan herds Rachel and Clara past.

EXT. SUV - DAY

A black SUV drives through the countryside. The front doors bear magnetic signs with Dan's mug a AAA Watson Realty.

INT. SUV - DAY

Brilliant wet green outside. In here it's all blue.

RACHEL
Have they been around the house?

DAN
Not yet. Art said they might be.

Rachel's eyes are caught by something ahead on the road -

A McDonald's bag blows in the lane - weighed down by trash food - suddenly, Rachel glimpses the boy in blue on a hill nearby, watching. She panics -

RACHEL
Hold up!

DAN
What -

The bag EXPLODES in a ball of fire - the SUV ROCKS AND BLASTS through - Rachel blocks it with her arms - and it disappears. She looks behind them. The bag blows. Rachel forces calm.

RACHEL
Sorry. A little jumpy I guess.

Clara's in back. She meets Dan's eyes in the mirror. Rachel glances at her, then out at the trees. She lights up.

DAN
You're smoking again?

RACHEL
I know, I gotta quit. It's a frickin job requirement in Iraq.

DAN
You think you could maybe wait?

RACHEL
No, Dan, I really can't.

RACHEL'S VOICE
Did I really say that? God.

DAN
Clara's asthma.

Rachel's eyes are suddenly moved. Her anger is gone. She turns to Clara and the cigarette has vanished - literally. She speaks in the scene, but from her perspective looking back on this memory, half participating, half-trying to change things. She explains to Clara.

RACHEL

I'm sorry. I'm sorry I was so self-absorbed, I, I was afraid, I was angry.

But they don't see her. It's like they're ignoring her - but it's because it's a memory. Suddenly the cigarette is back.

She looks at it. Unrolls the window and throws it out. Closes the window, trying to change history.

No dice. It's back, smoking away. She takes a drag and realizes what she's doing, throws it out.

RACHEL

This isn't how it was! It's how it seemed, but it isn't how it was, not on the inside! I wasn't this big a jerk!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Blue doors, steel plates, GURGLED BREATHING.

ORDERLY

Coming true!

SMASH! Rachel's barely conscious, on a gurney, in a camel-colored dress, covered in deep red blood. TWO BROWN-SKINNED ORDERLIES and a nurse at her side. Pakistanis or Iraqis, maybe. They rush her past a man in desert fatigues.

ORDERLY

COMING TRUE!

SMASH!

INT. RACHEL & DAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rachel bolts upright, yelling. WEEPING. SCREAMING. Her chest is still covered in blood. Dan's immediately wrestling her down, hand over her mouth, pure reaction.

DAN

What! What!? Stop it!

She fights him back, unconsciously, PUNCHES him in the eye. It's a real hardscrabble bed struggle.

DAN

Damn it, Rachel! Wake up!

RACHEL

Don't!

Rachel's eyes are black. Suddenly the light goes on.

CLARA

Mom?

Rachel calms. Takes in her real surroundings. No blood.

RACHEL

Oh God. I had the worst dream.

DAN

Yeah tell me about it.

RACHEL

Post-traumatic stuff. I'm sorry.
Shrink says you shouldn't try to
restrain me.

DAN

It was a reaction, I mean, come on.

Clara laughs. Rachel laughs too, in spite of herself.

DAN

What?

CLARA

You got a black eye.

DAN

Oh for Pete's sake.

CLARA

Good night.

Rachel lays back down and stares into the darkness.

DAN

I'm going to have to use your make-
up in the morning.

RACHEL

Should be here somewhere. Unless
you used it all up while I was
gone.

Dan stares at the wall, his face bleak. PIANO music rises...

EXT. INTERLOCHEN, WISCONSIN - MORNING

A bird's shadow moves over house and yard in the morning light, reminiscent of Rachel's chopper over the desert. It lights on a wire near the Watson home. Its yellow eye reflects the sun. The PIANO finishes.

INT. WATSON HOME - MORNING

Rachel pads down the stairs in PJs, barefoot. Everything is plush and clean and quiet, a somewhat sterile suburban show house. She makes her way to the kitchen. A note:

RACH - dropped Clara downtown so you can rest. Have 2 showings. See you later. -DAN

Rachel looks at the coffee maker. Its red LED glows.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CHOPPER - DAY

The red LED glows on the weapons system as Rachel skims low over US Marines and Joseph fires the 240 Golf machine gun over them into an insurgent stronghold ahead.

Rachel's hand grabs the stick, pulls up -

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. WATSON HOME - MORNING

Rachel's hand lifts the coffee pot. It pours loudly.

She walks around the breakfast bar and sits in the cushioned, castered chair by the sliding glass door. The AC kicks on, blowing quiet air from a floor vent. It's so strange, being back here. She sips her coffee and looks out the window - and sees the boy in blue. Staring in at her from a green knoll in the yard.

Rachel draws her knees up to her chest. Stares back at him.

RACHEL

Go away.

He's gone. She sigh and closes her eyes. Sips her coffee.

INT. WATSON HOME - LATER

The PIANO again. Rachel, now dressed, inspects the dining room, looking for a purpose.

She's been gone so long all traces of her have either vanished or been put away in drawers. She finds a blank spot on the wall near the built-in buffet. She searches the drawers and finds a framed photo of her in fresh guard gear with Dan and a 2-year-old Clara. She puts it back up on the wall. She watches...

Clara playing the baby grand in the living room. Sitting next to her on the bench is her teacher, SHAHROOZ ALAMI, 21. He's Persian-American, slender and polite. He nods at her playing, encouraging.

SHAHROOZ

Yes, like that. That's better.

Clara's leg reaches for a pedal, and when it comes back it presses against Sharooz's. She bobbles a second, recovers,

CLARA

(almost whispers)

Sorry

but doesn't move the leg. Neither does he.

Rachel's face clouds, taking it in.

RACHEL

(sotto, getting it)

Hey -

CLOSE on THE baby grand keyboard, blue in the long light. Clara's fingers fly over the keys. Her straight metallic blue hair hangs in her face. She plays with a brilliant but technical style. An immature girl Mozart. Concentrating. Intense, but it's airy.

Rachel approaches, drawn. Shahrooz is listening critically. Clara finishes with a flourish. Dramatic, but somehow still not near what she may be capable of at maturity. A beat.

SHAHROOZ

I'm not convinced you're sure about how the logical theme grows and changes. It really needs to be triumphant here in the e-flat return.

CLARA

But can I apply?

SHAHROOZ

You need to set yourself to showing a different mind set at each theme repeat. That will show the committee you really know how to depict passion.

CLARA
But I can apply.

SHAHROOZ
You can apply.

She bangs her joy out in a rock ditty and shakes her toosh.

CLARA
(singing)
Whooh! I can apply! I can apply!

He grins, loving her life force. Rachel turns away.

INT. DAN'S OFFICE IN THE DEN - DAY

Duck and beaver decor. He packs his brief case.

RACHEL
You're leaving again?

DAN
Open house. Sorry, I couldn't
reschedule.

RACHEL
How long has she been seeing him?

DAN
I don't know what you're talking
about.

RACHEL
Shub, shah -

DAN
Shahrooz? She's not seeing him.

She follows him into the...

GARAGE

He tosses his stuff in the SUV and loads a huge AAA-DAN
WATSON yard sign and some OPEN HOUSE signs into the back.

RACHEL
Have you just - Dan, what have you
been doing? Have you just been
letting her go?

DAN
Rachel, we're not starting, are we?

He presses the door opener. The door rises, dripping red paint in a strange fine shower. Rachel looks up. She holds her hand out and a red drip splatters into her palm. She smears it with a finger.

RACHEL
It looks like blood.

She takes the door opener from Dan and steps through. She presses the opener. The door closes, revealing the word **TERRORIST** painted across the door.

RACHEL
Bastards.

She marches for the front door.

INSIDE

Clara plays the piece again. Rachel dials the hall phone.

RACHEL (into phone)
Yeah I need an officer out here.

OUTSIDE

Dan's is hosing the door off in his nice realtor clothes.

RACHEL
Hey, you're destroying evidence!

DAN
What?

RACHEL
I got the police coming!

DAN
Well you coulda told me.

RACHEL
I went inside to phone -

DAN
Rachel, this isn't something we want to be drawing attention to. Just, let me take care of it, okay? We'll pretend it didn't happen.

Beat. He resumes spraying. She watches the bloody water bounce off the door in fine droplets.

CLOSE ON A DROPLET as it falls and **SPLAT!** and we are...

INT. INTERLOCHEN CONSERVATORY ADMISSIONS OFFICE - DAY

Clara approaches the desk. A sour CLERK looks up at her. The air's pink as though we're INSIDE the blood and water droplet. Underwater lighting. SOUND is slightly distorted.

CLARA
I'd like to have an application,
please.

RACHEL'S VOICE
(clear, undistorted)
You told me about this part.

CLERK
One doesn't apply, one auditions.

CLARA
I know, I did last year. But you
have to fill out the forms first.

CLERK
(judging this townie)
You were rejected last year?

CLARA
Yes.

CLERK
You realize that if you're rejected
twice, you cannot apply again.

CLARA
(undaunted)
Yes.

A pause. The clerk hands her forms. Clara turns to go.

CLERK
You have to schedule an audition!
They're in two weeks!

CLARA
I know, thank you!

EXT. INTERLOCHEN, WISCONSIN - DAY

Clara rides, Ipod on, almost dancing on her bike. Her form casts a shadow that plays over the gravel shoulder, the bike wheels shadow MATCH DISSOLVES into...

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

...the gurney wheels CLACK CLACK CLACK rhythmically over the cheap tiles. Rachel, barely conscious, looks for Clara.

RACHEL
Clara. Clara?

EXT. SYCAMORE STREET - DAY

The shadow of little Clara, 4, plays along the asphalt.

She riding her first bike, in kiddie fatigues. Rachel, now only 23, runs behind, holding the bike up by the seat.

A PLAYING CARD goes CLACK CLACK CLACK in the spokes. Clara's face is a painting of little girl joy and terror.

CLARA
(oddly, her adult voice)
Don't let go!

RACHEL
You ready?

CLARA
(speaking as a child now)
No!

Rachel lets go of the little bike with a parting shove. The training wheels hang out of her back pocket.

CLARA
No! No mommy, please!

Clara SCREAMS, but she stays up. Rachel stops.

RACHEL
I told you you could do it!

CLARA
I can do it!

RACHEL
(quieter, with pride)
I told you.

CLOSE on the playing card in the spokes, now THWACKING fast - CHOP CHOP CHOP fading into...

EXT. IRAQI DESERT - DAY

...the shadow of a helicopter dances and flows over the Iraqi desert. Its sound CHOPS CHOPS CHOPS.

RACHEL (FILTERED, V.O.)
Clara just couldn't wait to get
those training wheels off.

BOOTIE (FILTERED, V.O.)
That's cool she trusted you so
much.

INT. CHOPPER - DAY

RACHEL
Yeah. Yeah she did.

She smiles as she looks out over the upcoming landscape.
They're talking over their headsets.

RACHEL
Okay Bootie, your turn. Favorite
family memory.

IN BACK

TOM "BOOTIE" EDWARDS, a 24 year old skinny redneck, sits with
FRANNIE ASCHBACH, 27, heavier and black, both Marines.

BOOTIE
(eyeing Frannie)
Ah'n know, I cayn't really talk
about that I guess.

Frannie spits a sunflower seed out and shakes his head.

FRANNIE
Bootie'd favorite memory was when
he fucked his cousin Henrietta.

BOOTIE
That's bullshit, he's making shit
up again.

Rachel smiles as she flies on.

EXT. CHOPPER - DAY

The chopper floats across an ocean of desert.

FRANNIE (FILTERED, V.O.)
It's no shame, that's what you
crackers do is marry your cousins -

BOOTIE (FILTERED, V.O.)
You ain't got no call to be racist.

EXT. KARBALA, IRAQ - DAY

The boy in supersaturated blue turns away.

A woman in hijab carries water. Professional-looking fathers in dirty dark slacks and button down oxfords stand with covered women and young children in line behind a large US ARMY truck. GIs pass out food.

The chopper flies over and past, doppler effect, CHOP CHOP WOP WOP WOP... KA THUMP KA THUMP... It's A HEARTBEAT...

A dead fountain in a crowded town square.

A PEASANT with a donkey cart looks up at the CHOP CHOP CHOP.

He nods to two MEN IN A RENAULT, and then reaches under the burlap covering his cart.

BOOTIE (V.O.)
Look at them. Dang ragheads.

INT. CHOPPER - DAY

Rachel is flying, watching the city below.

JOSEPH
It's weird how crowded it is today.

RACHEL
Mawlid al-Nabi.
(Joseph looks at her; she
shrugs)
Muhammad's birthday.

BOOTIE
I miss my kid too. When I get
home, I'll tell you what, I'm gonna
grab that little bugger and wrassle
with him, that's what he love to
do, he says Dada, wrassle -

FRANNIE
He calls you Dada?

BOOTIE
Yeah what's wrong with that?

The HEARTBEAT grows louder. She sees the square below.

RACHEL
You see them?

Joseph nods. Rachel scans the rooftops.

The dry fountain. Two women in hijab HURRY AWAY.

JOSEPH
Don't see any lookouts though.

Rachel frowns, sees the donkey cart - the HEARTBEAT SLOWING -
WOP WOP WOP - THE PEASANT lifting a shoulder-fired rocket,

THE TWO MEN near the Renault pointing handguns -

THE CROWD running away -

PSSSHT PSSHT - Two holes through the floor.

JOSEPH
Shit -

His leg's bleeding. Rachel pulls up but the peasant FIRES -

RACHEL (into headset)
Bond steel, bond steel, this is
Gunfighter 31 -

The rocket SEARS toward them -

OUTSIDE

Rachel makes an extreme sideways climb - the rocket misses
them - but nicks the edge of the rotor and BLOWS the chopper
SIDEWAYS twenty feet in mid air -

INSIDE

The safety glass BLOWS INWARD over Bootie and Frannie, in a
CLOUD OF FIRE -

RACHEL (into Headset)
we're taking heavy ground fire
location 2 miles north -

The fire cloud consumes the screen.

THROUGH THE FIRE:

glimpses of masks, scrubs, a DOCTOR peering in her eyes, a
brilliant LIGHT from his pen.

BACK TO THE FIRE...

INT. ALAMI FINE RUGS - NIGHT

...which transforms into the raging filament... of a light bulb in a beautiful brass Turkish lamp with a brass shade and a fringe of tiny strings of amber beads.

Rachel is walking behind the Alamis: ASAD, 51, and MAHASTI (MAHI), 48. Clara is there, and Shahrooz, their son. Mahi's dressed like a "liberated" Western Persian, and her pearly nails, gold bracelets, and gleaming black hair are immaculate. Beautiful rugs hang draped over rods.

CLARA
(hoping Rachel's pleased)
Isn't it amazing?

MAHI
It is really no big thing, just our
little bit of home family import
business.

Rachel just smiles. Mahi is the picture of hospitality. Asad links pinkies with her. He has a Persian accent.

ASAD
We came here when Shahrooz was
accepted on faculty at the school.
The youngest one ever.

SHAHROOZ
Bawbaw, please.

MAHI
Gerami, they are guests.

ASAD
What, if a man cannot brag about
his son, what can he do?

Rachel longs for this closeness; reaches for Clara's hand.

RACHEL
You have a wonderful family. We
Americans could learn from you
Middle Easterners about family.

Asad swallows his offense and points to a nearby rug.

ASAD
Saruk Farahan. Very rare. Fit for
kings.

RACHEL
It's beautiful.

Suddenly the silver bells on the door tinkle. MABEL MILLER walks in. She sees Rachel and freezes.

MABEL
I uh. I'm sorry, I saw the light
on, I didn't realize -

ASAD
No no, Mrs Miller. What is it that
you need?

INT. RACHEL'S QUARTERS - DAY

Joseph sleeps. Rachel sits naked in bed, looking at Mabel's picture in his helmet. The TV plays the crazy scenes.

MABEL (V.O.)
I uh. I forgot my paycheck.

INT. ALAMI FINE RUGS - CONTINUOUS

RACHEL
You work here?

Asad glances at Rachel and Mabel, anxious. Mabel nods.

Asad is now by the podium bearing the cash register. He moves aside an ornate curtain and reaches underneath. Rachel glimpses a safe and a silver-barreled revolver, engraved in Farsi. He finds Mabel's paycheck.

ASAD
Here it is.

RACHEL
(to Mabel)
I'm sorry.

MABEL
I know.
(to Asad:)
Thank you.

Mabel leaves. There's an awkward silence.

MAHI
You must understand. Our family is
Persian, not Arab. But we cannot
afford to have our patriotism
questioned in this days.

Rachel just nods. Asad nods with, willing her to understand. The sound of a HEARTBEAT - and of SHEARS...

INT. PRE-OP - DAY

Rachel is lifted from the gurney onto the operating table. A mask is strapped onto her face. Her arms turn to ice and frost rolls off them.

RACHEL'S VOICE
What's happening to me?

We drift up and away as a NURSE shears off the remainder of her dress. Rachel looks aside and she's in her...

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Rachel inspects the kitchen. All is in perfect order. She JUMPS when the phone rings.

RACHEL
Hello?

CLARA'S VOICE (ON THE PHONE)
Mom?

RACHEL
Clara?

She looks at Clara playing the piano in the other room. Huh?

CLARA'S VOICE (ON THE PHONE)
Mom, listen to me. You've got to hang on. You've got to fight like you've never fought before.

RACHEL
Who is this? Hello!?

DAN (ON THE EXTENSION)
Hello?

WOMAN'S VOICE (JUDY)
Dan?

DAN (ON THE EXTENSION)
Hi. I've got it, Rachel.

RACHEL
Dan?

DAN
Yeah. I've got it, honey.

RACHEL
Dan what's happening?

DAN
Uh, I've got it, Rachel.

Rachel hangs up. Tries to figure out what happened, fails.
She checks the sink. Sparkling. Clara is playing in the BG.

INT. DAN'S OFFICE IN THE DEN - CONTINUOUS

Dan talks on the phone.

DAN
Yeah. Well sure, Tuesday looks
real good.

Then he gets intimate and quiet.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Rachel runs her finger on the range hood. No dust. Huh.
Dan gets louder again in the BG.

DAN (O.S.)
Now be sure to call the sellers
tonight.

She peeks under the stove top. Spotless.

INT. STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Dan finishes his call.

DAN
Okay, see you then. Yeah. Bye.

He hangs up. From OS, a CRASH.

RACHEL (O.S.)
Shit -

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Rachel's got a pot of water going and ingredients out. She's
cleaning up a broken jar of flour when Dan walks in.

RACHEL
Watch it don't step in it!

DAN
What's going on?

RACHEL
I'm cooking dinner, what's it look
like? Shit.

She's rattled by the confusing phone call, the spotlessness -
the mounting evidence that they've all gotten along fine
without her. And now she's cut her finger. The red blood
drips into the flour.

DAN
Let me help -

RACHEL
It's fine!

Dan steps back.

DAN
You don't have to do this.

RACHEL
Well I just thought you two might
like a home-cooked dinner for a
change.

She opens the fridge door. It's spotless and nearly empty.

RACHEL
I mean, what have you been eating
around here?

DAN
Frozen Gourmet.

He opens the freezer. It's neatly packed with boxes saying
"Frozen Gourmet". Clara's piano piece is crescendoing.

RACHEL
Clara, could you stop playing for a
minute? I can't hear myself think!

DAN
Honey! Relax.

INT. WATSON LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Clara stops. Sits at the piano.

DAN (O.S.)
You want me to get you a drink?

Suddenly Clara closes it and gets up.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

RACHEL
I uh. No. Thanks. I quit
drinking about four months ago.

DAN
You're kidding.

RACHEL
(meaning no, she's not)
Yeah.

Clara walks in, pulls three dinners out of the freezer.

RACHEL
Sweetheart, I'm sorry. I adore
your playing I really do. Please,
no no, please, let me do this.

CLARA
It's okay, I've got it.

Rachel steps back, angry, confused, smiles to herself.

CLARA
What?

RACHEL
I can't get over what a woman you
are.

She's like an outsider in her own home. She watches Clara take over. Sees a CD on the recipe desk, CARAVAN IN THE KEYS by Sharooz Alami. She opens it, looks at the gleaming CD. Sees her own warped reflection. Dariush plays over...

INT. ALAMI HOUSE - EVENING

...from the Alamis' gleaming black stereo. The crystal door closes under Mahi's manicured fingers.

The walls are covered with rich oil paintings of shepherds and camels, of lute players and great landscapes. A granite-topped coffee table holds crystal bowls of pistachios, dates and fine chocolates. On the living room floor, a finely woven blanket is laid out near the front window with silver bowls and three places.

In a chair nearby sits Asad. He's got a view out the front window. He sips his tea from a glass mug and focuses back on his paper, headlined RESERVIST FACES COURT MARTIAL.

MAHI
Asad, can you carry rice?

ASAD
Mahi I'm looking for your son, he
is late again.

He's doing no such thing, but he looks up as a pair of lights
swing into the driveway.

Mahi comes with the rice. But it's not Mahi. It's Rachel
dressed as her. Longing to be her, to belong. She scolds
Asad with an endearment.

MAHI/RACHEL
Gerami, get up! We are a strong
family, are we not?

OUTSIDE

Shahrooz exits his Mercedes. The alarm chirps behind him.

INSIDE

Asad is fastidiously washing his hands. He looks up.

ASAD
Joon-am, you should not keep your
mother waiting.

SHAHROOZ
I'm sorry bawbaw-jahn.

ASAD
(drying his hands)
Sofreh is important for us to be a
family. You know how she feels.

SHAHROOZ
I know.

LATER

The Alamis sit around the blanket and eat from the elegant
tableware as the sky turns a deep azure.

The scene is bathed in yellow light from a nearby lamp,
placed next to a full grand piano. They laugh at a story
Mahi/Rachel tells them, then Asad smiles at his son.

MAHI/RACHEL
Play for us your new song.

Shahrooz smiles and goes to the piano. His fingers fall like a flock of swallows, darting and fluttering over the keys. The piano gleams. Mahi/Rachel clears dishes. Asad places a hand on her arm bangles, draws her to him.

ASAD

Later.

She sits down in his arms, loving the feeling of belonging. He kisses her hair and holds her as they sit on the floor, listening to their son speak the language of angels.

CLOSE on Rachel/Mahi, and suddenly she lifts a cigarette to her lips and we pull back and...

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Rachel draws long on a cigarette, exhales, imagining. But the exhale has the SUCKING SOUND of a hospital machine.

DOCTOR 2 (V.O.)

Jesus Christ. I can't hold a BP.

Rachel looks up to the ceiling to find the voice. Suddenly she and the entire room are racked by a terrible tremor -

INT. LARGER CHOPPER - DAY

Rachel sits with several other officers in a larger chopper, watching the abandoned building she was held in in the opening scene. One wing of it is burning.

RADIO CHATTER

Target reacquired.

Suddenly two guided missiles SEAR in and blow the rest to smithereens in a huge ball of dust and flame. The transparent shock wave rolls toward them and hits them.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

Rachel's body rocks as if blasted by the shock wave. The Doctor, a brown-skinned North Indian man, pulls a probe away from her wound.

DOCTOR 1

Just stay steady. We're almost ready to go. You ready Julie?

The sedative overtakes Rachel. EASY LISTENING MUSIC plays. Mrs Robinson. He doots along to the tune. Her eyes close.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

MRS ROBINSON continues. The breakfast counter is set with china, white linen place mats, and linen napkins. The Frozen Gourmet leftovers look delicious. Dan and Clara talk animatedly with one another as Rachel watches and smiles and smokes. Like an outsider.

Dan pours himself another glass of wine, and lifts his glass to her. She smiles, watches the wine meets his lips, slide into his mouth. His breath fogs the glass with the sound of her HOSPITAL BREATHING.

A GLIMPSE OF HER IN THE GREEN MASK. IT FOGS.

She looks at her own glass of sparkling water in a wine goblet. She drops her smoke into it, watches as it snuffs out in a HISS and a puff of smoke. We PULL BACK and we're...

INT. MILITARY TRIBUNAL - DAY

A judge-advocate has just doused his cigarette in his water. The ARTICLE 32 OFFICER speaks. Rachel sits in class-A uniform.

ARTICLE 32 OFFICER

This Article 32 hearing is now is session. The matter of the Wisconsin Army Reserve versus Captain Rachel Watson is before the court. The purpose of an Article 32 hearing is for us to engage witnesses and discover facts...

We move CLOSER and CLOSER in on Rachel's set jaw, and she wills her face not to reveal any emotion... her back ramrod straight and seated military attention. As we move in TIGHT on her face the PIANO music rises... and then the sound of a SHOT. The PIANO music falters. The sound of SCREAMING and COMMOTION. Her eyes roll back, refocus by a sheer act of will and she's...

INT. CROWD - DAY

...on a red carpeted floor, in a camel colored dress, surrounded by people. She swallows, fighting the shock. Her dress is rapidly flooding with deep crimson blood from a hole in her abdomen -

She lies in an impossible contortion, mostly face up, unable to move. Dark blood bubbles billow around the hole.

A BROWN-SKINNED MAN with an accent kneels beside her. Checks her pulse, gives orders to elevate her feet.

BROWN-SKINNED MAN
Elevate! Elevate! Call an
ambulance!

Suddenly he's wearing a turban and has a long Muslim cleric's beard - the cleric from the painting in her cell in Iraq -

RACHEL
Get away -

BROWN-SKINNED MAN
Relax, I'm a doctor - the ambulance
is coming.

Rachel looks to her left through the crowd and sees a pair of cut crystal and stained glass doors nearby, catching the light in an amazingly beautiful way, glowing like the gates of heaven, but then in the hall beyond them, drifting sand.

CLARA
Mom?!

RACHEL
Clara, where am I? Is it Najaf?

The doctor tries to reassure her, but all we hear is her BREATHING, and the CROWD VOICES. We move toward that horrible bullet hole -

and we plunge into it, through the red muscles and bilious yellow and purple and green bleeding organs, following its curved and rapidly flooding path, and as we do the VOICES FALL AWAY, until all we hear is her STRUGGLE TO BREATHE...

Finally up ahead we see light. We move toward it.

RACHEL'S VOICE
Oh my God, the tunnel of light. Oh
shit. Fuck. It's too soon! I'm
not gonna do it! I got too much to
live for!

Rachel's spirit is in the

TUNNEL

and memories and dreams are flowing like traffic now, no longer only blood cells but blood-slaked silvery bubbles of time, past events, future events, dreams and imagination, all moving toward the drain of light above and ahead.

As she speaks a few of the cells stop their flow and form a zygote. More collect and the zygote forms a homunculus, that begins to fight its way back. Sees the memory of helping Clara ride her bike float by like an amoeba, and grabs it.

RACHEL'S VOICE

You can't have them. Jesus,
they're a mess, it's all, a
horrible mess, you can't take them,
not yet, I have to clean this up -

She starts grabbing other memories and dreams as they flow past like cells. They each play on, their own scenes, and they flop over her, sliming her. She's grabbing huge bunches... gaping handfuls, armloads of the bloody silvery cellular mess of her life.

Below, at the base of the tunnel is another scene - the operating room, seen from above. Clearly for the first time now. Rachel fights her way back toward it.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

We're floating above. Rachel's body's below on an operating table with all the machines and beeping alarms. Her gut is splayed open with clamps and her organs glistening.

NURSE

Clear!

The team clears - the nurse slaps the paddles on - B O O M !
Her breasts are burned.

RACHEL'S VOICE

Holy shit.

She's there in the room, walking around the operating table in horror, examining her own body lying on the table. She's still carrying her armloads of shimmering, dripping memories, full scenes going on silently in each one.

DOCTOR 2

Fuck, fuck, fuck!

Blood soaked and exhausted, they step back from her body.

DOCTOR 1

We gotta call it.

RACHEL

No wait - wait! Look!

Rachel squeezes her fist with immense effort and the index finger of her body flicks the tiniest bit. It goes unnoticed.

RACHEL
Come on, look, damn it! If I can
do that I'm not dead!

DOCTOR 2
Time of death, 4:21 PM.

RACHEL
Wait! I'm right here! I'm not
dead! I'm not dead!

The nurse reaches up to shut the monitor off, but just as she
does IT BLIPS - unfortunately nobody sees it.

DOCTOR 2
Wait. Turn it back on.

A straight line. He sighs. Reaches up and turns it off.

RACHEL
No! It's beating! You saw it!
God damn it, you saw it! My heart
is still beating for Christ sakes!
I can move my finger! You can't
give up that easily! I am still
alive!

And indeed as she yells in anger we see her body's jugular
vein pump with another fleeting beat - but nobody else does.

RACHEL
Oh my god -

She turns and is in the...

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

talking to Clara. Doctor 2 leaves and Clara nods, weeping.

RACHEL
No, don't listen to them! I'm not
dead! Don't let them let me go!
Shit! I don't accept this! Clara!

But Clara's turning away, not hearing her. Her memory cells
are dripping, disheveling over the floor. Crumbling.

RACHEL
Think! Think about something! Get
that heart going faster! Clara.
You, are so beautiful, argh! No!
You're so selfish! That's it!
I'm angry at you! I'm angry!
Listen to me you little bitch!
(MORE)

RACHEL (cont'd)
Listen to me! Can't you see I did
this all for you!?

CLARA
No, you didn't!

RACHEL
You can hear me!?

CLARA
Of course I can! What did you
expect? I'm your creation, in your
mind, under your control, just the
way you like it!

RACHEL
Look! Look!

She fumbles through her memories. One splashes to the floor.

RACHEL
Shit, what was that!? Never mind,
I don't remember. Look! There's
still a chance, sweetheart, please!
I came, I came all the way back
with these, it's too much of a
mess, I, I can't leave it like
this, hurry, we don't have much
time!

Clara's being held by Shahrooz, not hearing Rachel any more.

RACHEL
Clara! You have to help me. I
feel like if I can get through to
you, the real you, you can tell
them to keep trying! To not let me
die! Clara! It's your mother! I
came to your audition, didn't I?

But then Clara and the waiting room crumble and fall away...

EXT. SPACE - DAY

Total black. The sound of DRIPPING WATER.

RACHEL
Clara?

It echoes. A thousand porcelain pedestal sinks stretch on
forever, each dripping, each drip a different color. The
drips make notes like a water XYLOPHONE.

VOICE (O.S.)
You can't get to her that way,
Rachel.

Her father's there, walking along the xylophone keys, because the sinks are gone now and it's a never-ending xylophone, each key a different color. They twist like a strand of DNA.

He walks toward her, his hands in his pockets, looking dapper. He tap dances out a little tune on the keys. He's about 40, and has lipstick on his collar.

RACHEL
Dad?

She's grease-smudged, 18,

dressed in a car garage coverall that says BIG AL'S and has her name embroidered in script.

RACHEL'S FATHER
She can't hear you, honey.

EXT. BIG AL'S GARAGE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

They sit on a wall, both drinking beer. Several empties.

RACHEL'S FATHER
Your mother's always been a proud woman. She can't hear any of us. See here's what I realized tonight. We're all separate people, we're not connected at all. We come in this world alone, we go out of it alone, and in between, we just think we're connected. But we're not. It's all an illusion. So it shouldn't matter, hear, not hear.

RACHEL
But that's too sad.

RACHEL'S FATHER
No, it's freeing. If we can realize this about each other, we stop trying to change each other. We just, try to fit. It's like we've got this crystal door inside us. It's made up of our history, our pains and shames, our genetics, who knows, I'm just a stupid drunk repair garage owner. But I know this is right. I feel it, Bucky.

(MORE)

RACHEL'S FATHER (cont'd)
 We got this door, and the most we
 can ever do is try to see each
 other through this thick, distorted
 crystal. I've been standin on my
 side of it lookin at your mom for
 years. It's just that she stopped
 looking back. Can you understand?
 I gotta leave her, Bucky. I'm
 gonna leave your mom.

Rachel's teary. He gets up. Turns back to Rachel. Suddenly
 she's no longer 18. She's 35 again.

RACHEL'S FATHER
 (echoing like the space)
 You wanna get to Clara, you gotta
 get to the crystal door, and hope
 she's lookin.

RACHEL
 The crystal door.

GOOGOOSH'S MUSIC rises, pliant, haunting, beautiful...

EXT. INTERLOCHEN CONSERVATORY - DAY

...it transforms into CLARA'S PIANO PLAYING. Rachel hurries
 with Shahrooz through the Interlochen campus and up the steps
 to the auditorium building....

INT. INTERLOCHEN CONSERVATORY CORRIDOR - DAY

...and toward the crystal doors. A beautiful, glowing light
 pours out of them with the music.

MABEL (O.S.)
 Rachel?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. IRAQI SECURITY COMPOUND - DAY

The CLANG of the blue-gray-brown steel door reverberates.
 The room is twilit from some very small, high windows. Empty
 concrete floor, barren gray-blue-brown walls. A single
 framed poster/photograph of a turbaned Muslim cleric, his
 beard hanging over a black tunic.

Dust hangs in the long blue light. And there's Rachel.
 Naked. Sweat slaked. Shaking in fear. Opposite her, an
 empty chair. Somebody YELLS in the corridor outside. A man.
 Beseeching someone.

VOICE (IN ARABIC, SUBTITLED)

If you pardon and forbear and
forgive, then surely Allah is
Forgiving, Merciful. If you pardon
and forbear and forgive, then
surely Allah is Forgiving,
Merciful!

IT FALLS SILENT. Then FOOTSTEPS. A CHAIN RATTLES through a
hasp outside the door. Rachel blinks, breathes faster.
Swallows. The door opens and BONGS shut like the mouth of a
dungeon. Still CLOSE on Rachel. More FOOTSTEPS. They sound
like a HEARTBEAT. They stop. A chair SCRAPES.

THE IRAQI is probably about 35. Surprisingly, he wears khaki
slacks and a white oxford shirt, rolled up at the sleeves. A
dapper guy. Professional. He sits. Regards her.

She shakes. He pulls a pack of Marlboros out of his pocket.
Lights one. Offers the pack to her. She shakes her head,
no. He nods his jaw up at her, yes.

IRAQI

Come on, have a smoke with me,
woman.

There's something about his eyes that makes her want to
comply. She reaches out tentatively. Is it a trap? Her
fingers touch a cigarette, but he doesn't move. She draws it
out. He puts them away. She puts it in her mouth, hand
trembling uncontrollably. He lights it for her. She coughs.

IRAQI

Why are you so afraid? You think I
am a monster?

She looks down, tries to control her body.

RACHEL

No.

He sits back. Blows smoke.

IRAQI

Sit up.

She just looks at him. This is how it begins. A beat.

IRAQI

Let me explain something Hillary
Clinton, Laura Bush, whatever you
think you want to be, this is my
place here. I am in charge, okay?

She slowly sits up. Uncovers herself. Uncrosses her legs.

IRAQI

You think I'm maybe going to rape
you?

She just looks at him. He puts a hand on her bloody thigh.

IRAQI

Maybe you want me to rape you.
Then you can think of me as a
monster, yes? Fucking rag head
rapes the American woman. Maybe I
do this to you, eh?

Beat. He throws some 8x10s on her lap. Mutilated bodies.

IRAQI

That was done by your Marines. You
think maybe I do that to you? Or
maybe cut off your fucking head.

His face is suddenly bitter, hard. She stifles back tears.

RACHEL

Please.

Her looks at her face, her sweat-covered breasts.

IRAQI

You're very beautiful. I'm sorry
they beat you.

It's too much.

RACHEL

What do you want!?

IRAQI

What do I want? I'm trying to
understand, man, what can make me
so hateful, that you think I am
monster!

RACHEL

I don't!

IRAQI

That's bullshit, man! It's
bullshit! Why the fuck are you
here!?

RACHEL

Can I cover up, please?

IRAQI

No. You can answer the fucking question.

RACHEL

(crumbling with the irony)
We're here to liberate you.

IRAQI

To liberate me. You fuckers come in here, you bomb the hell out of my country, you massacre tens of thousand of civilians, and for what? Iraqi Freedom? No.

RACHEL

For democracy.

IRAQI

Democracy? Yeah, democracy. Where you go to school? Huh?

RACHEL

I uh. University of Wisconsin.

IRAQI

Ah, UW, Madison or Milwaukee, where?

RACHEL

(surprised)
Madison.

IRAQI

Party school. I went to Macalester. In Minnesota. And then to Stanford. You hear of those places?

RACHEL

Yeah.

IRAQI

I wanted to be a doctor. All my life, from a little boy, to help the poor, eh?

Rachel looks away. Hard to believe.

IRAQI

Yeah, that's pretty weird, huh? Because Iraqi insurgents are monsters. Religious fanatics, like George Bush.

(beat)

(MORE)

IRAQI (cont'd)

You know why Iraq was one of the poorest countries in the world even before this mess? Because of your sanctions, man. Because you hate that one Sunni Saddam Hussein so much, that CIA operative Saddam Hussein so much, that man trained by George Bush senior, so much, that you have killed millions of Iraqis with hunger and disease and pestilence, just to keep the gun to his head, and now you come and fuck us Sunni and Shiia both some more, and you wonder why we become religious? What are you looking like that for?

RACHEL

(her face is closed)

I don't think that's fair.

He SLAPS her. Hard. She falls off her chair, BAM!

Lands on her side on the floor. The chair clatters behind. She lies there, terrified. He comes and squats by her.

IRAQI

Tell to me, was that fair?

(She says nothing)

Get the fuck up!

She gets up. Sets the chair back up. Sits.

IRAQI

You won't tell to me?

(she just stares at him)

I said to you, was that fair?

She just looks at him. He PUNCHES her. This time she takes it. Rolls her head with it. Spits blood. But will not be broken by this fucking bastard. She stares again. Not showing any pain. Only bitterness. Her eyes tell that she will die before she fucking breaks.

He calms. Nods. Sits back down. Smiles.

IRAQI

You are very noble. You will die before you break, eh? That is like my people too. We challenged you and you struck us. And we did nothing to you. And now we hate you.

Her defiant gaze falters. His does not. He gets up, hands in pockets, and walks to the door. Two knocks.

It opens a crack. He says something to an unseen man outside. The door closes. He waits.

CLOSE ON RACHEL, he in the BG over her right shoulder.

IRAQI

Tell to me, what did you want to be, when you were a little girl?

Her face is a confused mix of anger and empathy.

The door opens and he's passed a plastic Worldcom bag. It closes and he walks back. Stands by her.

IRAQI

Come on man, I ask you a fucking question!

RACHEL

A writer.

IRAQI

A writer! Does that mean you see the world as black and white? Good and evil? Come on, tell me you're not so stupid as that. As a writer you have to empathize, to understand, man.

RACHEL

I never became one.

IRAQI

Well that's too bad for you.

He tosses the bag to her. She catches it with a gasp of fear. She looks inside.

IRAQI

Get dressed.

RACHEL

(afraid)

Where are you taking me?

IRAQI

I want to talk to you intimately. As a human being. Get dressed.

(He turns away)

I won't look.

Rachel gingerly slips into panties, hitches her bra... and shrugs into a conservative woman's tunic. Holds up a hijab.

The Iraqi stands looking off, studying his Marlboro pack.

IRAQI

Put it on.

Rachel's fingers fumble as she loosely dons the veil.

RACHEL

Okay.

He turns to her. He picks up his chair, comes and sits down in front of her. Very close.

IRAQI

Have another smoke.

Rachel takes one. He lights it for her, but this time it's almost sensual. It's a different energy. He leans in.

IRAQI

The first war, when I was a medical student in California, kill my father.

RACHEL

I'm sorry.

IRAQI

He was an old man. And he was pro-Saddam. But then, Bush was, Reagan was, everybody was pro-Saddam, right?

He takes the cigarette from her, flips it, takes a drag.

IRAQI

It's my last one.

He exhales. It's very intimate. He puts it back in her mouth. Gently. Almost sexually.

IRAQI

Then this war, shock and awe, you drop bombs... on my wife, my god, my daughter, while I'm at hospital, sewing up another man's wife.

He doesn't cry, but he lets her see his pain, deep into his soul. Rachel gasps back tears. Covers her mouth.

IRAQI

Why you cry?

RACHEL

I don't know. I'm sorry.

IRAQI
I'm not so much a monster now?

RACHEL
No.

IRAQI
You cover your face like my Mina.
She uncovers, tries not to cry.

RACHEL
It's not s'posed to have gone like
this.
He looks at her a long time, into her eyes, and then nods.

IRAQI
You wanted to be a writer and I was
going to learn to heal. Now we're
killing.

RACHEL
Please.
He stands up. Takes out a gun. Her gun. Chambers a round.

IRAQI
Why did you lower your gun, Rachel
Watson? It was an angry crowd.
She looks away...

INT. MILITARY TRIBUNAL - DAY

To ART BARNS, her military lawyer. She's being cross-
examined. THE ARTICLE 32 OFFICER listens like a judge.

JUDGE-ADVOCATE 1
And what did you answer?

RACHEL
(composes herself)
Sir, I said I didn't want to kill
anyone.

JUDGE-ADVOCATE 1
And you felt that was appropriate
to say to an enemy combatant, after
you'd all been taken prisoner
because of that action?

RACHEL

Yes, sir. It was the truth. The crowd was civilians. Women and children, and older men, mostly.

JUDGE-ADVOCATE 1

But someone shot down your helicopter.

RACHEL

Yes sir. Would you advocate we had shot everyone sir? Would that have been more courageous?

The Article 32 officer BANGS his gavel over her.

JUDGE-ADVOCATE 1

Captain you're out of order!

RACHEL

It's a reasonable question, sir!

JUDGE-ADVOCATE 1

That's not the point!

RACHEL

Oh yes it is! You're sitting here in Wisconsin questioning my courage, putting me on trial for my courage, I'd say it is the fucking point, sir! It is the point!

She pounds the table with her fingers and the Article 32 Officer BANGS and BANGS his gavel. Clara looks like she wants to melt into the bench. The last BANG cross fades into the sound of a chair SCRAPING over the floor.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

A Doctor pulls up a chair to where Clara and Shahrooz are sitting. Clara's on her cell phone, trying to maintain.

CLARA

Dad? It's mom. I'm at the hospital. Yeah. She's been shot. I don't know. Can you come? Okay. I, I don't, it doesn't look very good. Okay. Okay bye.

She hangs up and tries to regroup.

CLARA

I'm sorry.

DOCTOR 1
Take your time.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The ANESTHESIOLOGIST shuts off the gas. Removes the mask.
Rachel is still.

INT. WAITING ROOM - SECONDS LATER

Clara swallows, looks up at him. His elbows on knees, close,
intimate, gentle. He looks at both Clara and Shahrooz.

DOCTOR 1
Your mother's identification says
that she's an organ donor.

IN THE OPERATING ROOM

Rachel stares motionlessly up. CLOSE on her eye. Her pulse
blips once in a tiny vein in the corner. She BLINKS...

EXT. IRAQI DESERT - DAY

...and we PULL BACK. Rachel's spread-eagle on a sand dune.

Keep slowly PULLING BACK. The desert grows around her...

She becomes a small body in this vast landscape...

Darkness passes over and it changes to NIGHT. We keep
PULLING BACK until all of Iraq is there...

Until the entire Middle East is there... then the entire
European Hemisphere... then the entire earth...

Hearing SATELLITE CHATTER, we pass a US Military satellite...

The earth begins to shrink... we pass the sun, the solar
system itself begins to shrink...

We PULL BACK through gas clouds and rainbow nebulae until the
galaxy is a tiny speck of white light.

RACHEL'S VOICE
(stoned from anesthetic)
Why do I feel so stoned?

And we realize we're focused on a tiny reflection in Rachel's
iris. And we're not out in the universe. We're here:

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

Doctor 1 enters.

DOCTOR 1
Husband is on his way. Daughter
wants us to wait a second.

DOCTOR 2
(unusually upset)
Well, heart's shot, kidney, shit.
We could take the liver, one
kidney.

DOCTOR 1
Corneas look good. Let's get some
ice bins and solution. Let's get
her on some plasma and see if we
can keep a couple organs going.

The glint in Rachel's eye becomes...

EXT. BATTLEGROUND - IRAQ

...the bubble of her chopper. An RPG SEARS out from Rachel's
UH-1 and decimates an insurgent stronghold. The ground
forces below her make instant headway.

WIDE, HIGH

Three choppers support a troop movement.

SUPER: Najaf

INT. CHOPPER - DAY

Rachel's flying. The radio chatter's constant.

RADIO CHATTER
Hit hit! Nice job Gunfighter 31.

Joseph works one of the twin 240 Golf machine guns mounted in
front, it's throaty PING laying down suppressive fire, then
stopping as they fall back.

NEW CHATTER
Gunfighter 31, this is echo 2
bravo, we're getting pinned,
unknown numbers of Hajis at grid 6-
2-1 located in and among buildings
ahead of the four horsemen. Need
suppressive fire.

RACHEL

Roger that four horses, on our way.

She veers the chopper due east. It's got a name stenciled on the side: DYING HEART.

INT. BASE CANTEEN, COMBAT SUPPORT HOSPITAL, IRAQ - EVENING

The canteen is a one-story Casablanca-like tea house now being run by Kellogg, Brown & Root as a canteen.

The place is packed with contractors and military, and a few uncomfortable Iraqis. Card games, money on the tables.

Rachel sits with Joseph, who surreptitiously pours booze from a flask into their cokes. They clink. Various officers congratulate her.

JOSEPH

I never saw you fly like that back in Wisconsin.

RACHEL

Back then it was just playing. Get outa the house for a while. Here it's real.

JOSEPH

Never figured I'd really be here. I coulda pulled a medical, they found this old hernia, but Jeremy Hanson, -
(he becomes emotional)

RACHEL

Yeah -

JOSEPH

We were buds.

He trying not to cry. She reaches out, holds his hand. Guys whoop.

RACHEL

Hey, shut up.
(she focuses back on him)
You okay?

JOSEPH

No, it's fine.
(forcing a smile)
You're married to that realtor guy, huh? Triple A Dan.

RACHEL

Yeah.

JOSEPH

Guess you're getting outa the house now.

(She laughs bitterly)

Nice to know someone, same town.

INT. WATSON LIVING ROOM - DAY

Clara plays. Shahrooz is next to her. It's as if she's afraid to really put her gut into it. She looks at him out of the corner of her eye. Their arms almost touch. She reaches for a pedal, and when her leg comes back it touches his. He doesn't move away.

Carrying groceries past, Rachel notices. Clara finishes the piece. It's silent. Then, very quietly:

SHAHROOZ

It's better.

Clara closes her eyes. This isn't what she wanted to hear.

SHAHROOZ

Look. The dynamics -

He reaches over and plays several bars of the piece with immense passion. Clara swallows.

SHAHROOZ

It's sensual. You're playing like you're locked up. These judges will be looking for feeling, you know? You have to make a deep connection with them in the performance.

Clara's looking at his lips, his eyes, his passion. Her knee is still pressed against him. She nods.

SHAHROOZ

Feeling. Okay, try it again. But feel. From here.

He reaches down and puts his hand on her belly, gives a little shake. It's too much for Rachel.

RACHEL

Oh, please! You don't think I see what this is all about? Look. You're very good but I think the lesson should be over for today.

CLARA

Mom -

SHAHROOZ

(embarrassed)

No, she's right. It's getting late. I'll be late for dinner again.

INT. RACHEL & DAN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Rachel rides a stationary bike by their bedroom window.

CLARA

You didn't have to do that.

RACHEL

Sweetheart, think about it. Why are you doing this? Just out of pure childish defiance?

CLARA

Because I love it -

RACHEL

Honey, we had a plan. How are you going to go to college? You haven't even applied for any of the ROTC scholarships. I set the whole thing up for you before I left -

Her voice suddenly echoes. There's the sound of HOSPITAL MACHINES BEEPING and PEOPLE TALKING. She looks around.

RACHEL

Did you hear that?

CLARA

You don't even want to listen.

RACHEL

No. Wait.

CLARA

Oh please.

RACHEL

(refocusing on Clara)

Honey, I didn't want to come right off the plane and start telling you what to do. But since you bring it up, you're being foolish, dear.

CLARA
(whirling)
I don't want to be ROTC, mom! I
don't wanna get shot, or go fucking
crazy, okay? You want me to get
killed like Joseph -

Rachel ALMOST SLAPS her. Stops.

RACHEL
Don't you say that -

CLARA
I'm sorry.

RACHEL
I didn't do anything wrong, Clara.
It's important to me that you know
that.
(Clara nods)
Look. We talked about this. The
war's going to be over long before
you'd ever get activated. It's
your way to law school.

CLARA
And I told you I loved music.

Rachel turns, exasperated, looks for a robe in the closet.

RACHEL
It's a dream! It's not reality!
Sooner or later you're going to
have to learn the difference!
Christ he's even packed my robe
away.

The image shimmers and echoes, restabilizes. Rachel storms
out in exasperation, Clara following. She steps into...

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

and stops and turns.

RACHEL
Sweetheart, you had it all, you
really did. I set the whole thing
up for you and you're just throwing
it all away. It's stupid and
thoughtless after the sacrifices I
made for you.

CLARA

Look in the mirror and maybe you'll
see why.

Rachel sighs and turns her head away. Closes the door.

A HAND turns on the shower. Rachel, in a bra and pants,
leans against the wall and collects herself. She shakes her
head. Goes to the door. Opens it -

RACHEL

Honey, I'm sorry -

But Clara's ankling her way out the front door - SLAM.

RACHEL

I didn't do anything wrong.

She unbuttons and slides the pants down over her hips, off.
Her right leg is still swollen and has a huge angry scar with
thirty four black stitches. She looks at herself in the
mirror, then runs her hands over her once beautiful legs.

INT. ALAMI HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The granite-topped coffee table gleams by candlelight. Asad
and Mahi fidget in the kitchen and watch... Shahrooz play the
piano, a romantic piece. Rachel waltzes with Clara.

BACK IN THE BATHTUB

RACHEL floats, then slides under water, relaxing. Drifting.

BACK AT THE ALAMIS

They waltz.

RACHEL

I keep getting lost, thinking about
Iraq, about the trial, about our
arguments.

CLARA

You have to stay focused.

EXT. BEACH - SUNSET

They don't notice the scene change.

RACHEL

I think it's the anesthesia. I, I don't know how to reach you, Clara, the real you. You gotta help me find the crystal door.

CLARA

Crystal door?

BACK AT THE ALAMIS

RACHEL

It's a thing your grandpa used to say. We're all like ships in the night, disconnected, except we can talk to each other through this crystal door inside, that connects us all a little bit. Can you help me find it?

CLARA

I can try.

The corner of the room lights and they look. It's the...

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

The "real" version of Clara sits on the sofa with the "real" Shahrooz, as the other Shahrooz continues to play.

Rachel walks up to "real" Clara. Kneels and puts her hands on "real" Clara's knees. "Real" Clara doesn't notice. Rachel looks up at her.

RACHEL

There has to be some connection. We can't be totally isolated from each other. You're my baby. I know if I can find the right place in my mind you'll hear me. You'll save me.

She looks back at the other Clara, by Shahrooz at the piano.

CLARA

Where would we look?

Clara walks toward her and as she does the music fades and the Alami house dissolves, until they are only in the WAITING ROOM. Clara kneels by her and "real" Clara. The clock second hand ticks in slow motion.

RACHEL
They're going to cut me up.
There's just seconds left.

CLARA
Don't worry, your thoughts are
faster than that. We've got a
whole ocean of you!

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN, DOOR COUNTY, WISCONSIN - DAY

Rachel and Clara, 13, walk. Neither notice the scene change,
nor the fact that their clothes change second by second
through every outfit either of them has ever had.

RACHEL
That's the problem. I'm lost.

CLARA
Duh, every life is it's own ocean
of stories.

RACHEL
Don't say "duh," Clara.

As Clara speaks now, her voice changes through a stream of
all the voices from Rachel's life, like the voice of God.

CLARA
It's just up to us how good a job
we do of writing it. I mean think
about it, you're born and you grow
up, that's the beginning.

As she gestures, part of the lake divides away.

CLARA
You're faced with all these
challenges and nothing turns out to
be the way you thought it was,
that's the middle,

More of the lake divides away.

CLARA
and then either you take some big
risks and change inside and it
works out,

She gestures and more water divides away and she's holding a
clam.

She flips it open and a pearl gleams inside.

CLARA
or you don't.

She crushes the clam and it's sand through her fingers.

The water's back to normal.

RACHEL
You really think it's that simple,
huh?

CLARA
Yes.

RACHEL
Okay wise guy, then where do you
look for the secret pearl, like our
crystal door?

CLARA
Easy. It's gotta be where you
least want to look for it, and you
have to exhaust every other
possibility first. That's the way
life is. That's why you said you
wanted to be a writer, remember?
Just relax. Find your center
again.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

They don't notice the scene change. They are now on the
waiting room sofa. Clara's voice and age are back to normal.

RACHEL
Relax!? What are you talking
about!? They're going to harvest
my fucking organs! Where's the
door?

CLARA
You're hiding it from yourself!
Quit blaming me!

She turns away. Rachel grabs her arm.

RACHEL
Don't you walk away from me. Not
now... Why do you always have to
buck me like this?

CLARA
Because I'm not you. Well,
actually I take that back.
(MORE)

CLARA (cont'd)
In this case I am you, and you're
still fucking fighting with me!
What does that tell you?

She points to the "real" Clara over on the other sofa.

CLARA
Do you actually know any of the
people in your life? Or do you
just relate to your own fucking
ideas about them? That's such a
shitty thing about you.

Clara gets up, walks past "real" Clara and through the wall.

RACHEL
Clara, wait! I'm trying!

Rachel gets up, tries to follow through, and bounces off.

RACHEL
Ow! Shit!

She turns. She's in the...

INT. MILITARY TRIBUNAL - DAY

...facing the judge-advocates. A microphone in front of her.

ARTICLE 32 OFFICER
You understand Captain, this is an
Article 32 hearing. It is not a
court martial. Its only purpose is
to help us determine whether court
martial proceedings are warranted.

RACHEL
Yes sir, I do, and I, and I want to
apologize for my earlier outburst.

ARTICLE 32 OFFICER
Very well, we'll proceed with the
statement of charges.

The prosecuting judge-advocate stands and looks sternly at Rachel. He points at her and opens his mouth, but instead of words what comes out is PIANO MUSIC. Rachel looks to Art Barnes, but he doesn't seem to notice.

RACHEL
Clara!?

She looks back over her shoulder and we're...

EXT. WATSON HOUSE - DAY

Clara heads out the door, goes for her bike. Rachel follows.

RACHEL
Clara!

CLARA
What!?

RACHEL
Where are you going?

CLARA
Out.

RACHEL
No. Come on. We gotta talk.
Please?

INT. KARATE DOJO - NIGHT

They kickbox and work out. Rachel wants Clara to hit her.

RACHEL
Come on. You're mad at me. Let me
have it. Come on. What, you think
I should just be fine with you
throwing the whole plan away?
(takes a few jabs at her)
Come on, box with me.

CLARA
Fuck you.

RACHEL
That's it. Come on.

CLARA
Just stop it! You're both fucked
up and you don't even know it! I
hate my life.

RACHEL
What is this guy, Arab? I go to
Iraq and you start dating an Arab?
Just to spite me?

CLARA
He's Persian.

Rachel PUNCHES her in the face.

RACHEL
Come on. You gonna cry? Come on.

She PUNCHES her again.

RACHEL'S VOICE
Oh my God, I'm sorry.

RACHEL
Come on! Hit me damn it!
(Clara holds back tears)
Then cry! I work my whole life for
you, cry!

Rachel lands another punch. Clara breaks. She goes for Rachel, hitting, striking out, but missing. Rachel dodges easily and laughs.

RACHEL
You're out of practice.

CLARA
I don't wanna be in practice, can't
you get that!? I love him and I
want to play the piano!

WHAM! Rachel lands one on her nose. Stops her cold. It bleeds. Shocking. Rachel's angry at herself.

RACHEL
Damn it, Clara! You're supposed to
guard against me! What the hell
are you doing?

Clara's moving away, covering her face. Rachel follows. Then Clara stops. Turns. Then holds her arms open wide. She takes a step toward Rachel.

RACHEL
You think this is all just a game?

CLARA
Come on, mom, hit me. Knock some
sense into me.

She waves her off angrily. Clara keeps coming, bloody.

CLARA
Come on. Beat the shit out of me.
Come on, come on god damn you!

RACHEL
I'm not going to go there with you.

She whirls and marches away down the corridor toward the changing rooms. Her jaw trembles but her eyes stay firm. Then her face falls into sorrow.

RACHEL

Fuck!

EXT. HUMVEE, IRAQI STREET - DAY

She and Joseph look ahead. Another humvee is stopped. It's men out doing recovery around a third, burning humvee.

RACHEL

What is it?

JOSEPH

Recovery crew. Oh, Jesus.

One of the men dodges into the flames, catching on fire. He wraps his arms around something, and comes back out, burning - carrying a charred black but struggling GI with no legs.

RACHEL

Jesus Christ.

She gets out to go help.

JOSEPH

Don't -

She looks and sees a LOOKOUT on a school roof. ANOTHER on another building. She turns back -

The earth around the recovery Humvee ERUPTS into flame and dust - Rachel dives - hits the dirt - showered in dirt and flaming body parts. A severed burning arm lands in front of her. She weeps as she scrambles for cover. The image bounces off a windshield like a street lamp...

EXT. RACHEL'S CAR - NIGHT

The streets are black with fresh rain, though it's done now. Everything glistens darkly. The only sound is the hiss of tires on wet pavement.

INSIDE

RACHEL

I'm sorry I seem so angry. I just
feel like I'm losing you.

Clara's face looks forlorn and lost. The streetlights go by, light, dark, glinting off the windshield. The scene shifts...

INT. AMBULANCE - DAY

...Clara's with her and the two paramedics.

CLARA
Mom! Mom! Stay awake!

RACHEL
Oh, I didn't even realize you were here. I thought it was just these two monkeys.

PARAMEDIC 1
Don't try to talk.

RACHEL
(mumbles to herself)
Who shot me? If I can figure that out maybe I can stop this dying.
God, I pissed everybody off.

INT. CHOPPER - DAY

The windows BLAST in over Bootie and Frannie. The air is full of fire and blood.

RACHEL (O.S.)
Bond steel, Gunfighter 31, we're hit hard, losing altitude -

The chopper's shaking furiously... she fights for control -

JOSEPH
Jesus God.

In back, Bootie and Frannie are just getting their bearings, a gaping burned hole in the wall over Bootie's head.

INT/EXT. CHOPPER / TOWN SQUARE INTERCUT - CONTINUOUS

The chopper's missing one of its rotor blades and has a burning scorched hole on the top of one side. It's cycling and vibrating fiercely, trying to keep up on an unbalanced rotor - sinking and turning.

IN THE CHOPPER, Rachel's fighting to save it -

RACHEL (INTO HEADSET)
We're going down.

THE CROWD sees the chopper's going down and clears the area.

IN THE CHOPPER, Rachel fights valiantly. The ground tilts up at them at a crazy angle, then races for them -

OUTSIDE, THE CHOPPER loses all loft in the last twenty feet and SMASHES down onto the town square in a ferocious CRASH!

The body of the chopper itself seems to COMPRESS, then rebound slightly, then settle.

The engine grinds to a halt. The lone rotor WAH-WOP WAH-

IN THE CHOPPER, everyone is dazed. Bloody.

A huge shear of steel has bent up from the floor near Rachel's bloody thigh. They slowly stir and wake, as if from dreaming.

OUTSIDE, the crowd begins to return, staying back thirty feet or so in case it explodes. Curious. Angry.

YOUTH (ARABIC, SUBTITLED)
Imperialist!

Young teens, then older men, then women, begin to pick up stones and trash.

YOUTH 2 (ARABIC, SUBTITLED)
Country of evil!

Their boldness and anger climb. The youth throws a rock.

INT. CHOPPER - CONTINUOUS

Rachel and Joseph come fully alert as the rock hits the shattered bubble.

YOUTH 3 (O.S.)
Go home!

RACHEL
Shit. Ah!

She notices her leg.

YOUTH 2 (O.S.)
Godless infidels!

Joseph realizes what's happening. Rachel unstraps.

RACHEL
Guys!

She moves toward the back. More stones start to hit the shattered bubble. She slaps Bootie's face.

RACHEL
Bootie. Wake up.

JOSEPH (O.S.)
Bond steel bond steel, this is
gunfighter 31, over. Bond steel,
this is gunfighter 31, over.

RACHEL
We gotta do crowd control till they
can get us outa here.

BOOTIE
Oh shit.

JOSEPH
There's no signal.

More shit hits the bubble. Frannie chambers a round.

RACHEL
Put it back.

BOOTIE
Fuck, you gotta be kiddin, Captain.

RACHEL
They're civilians. Put it back.

BOOTIE
Fuck that -

RACHEL
Bootie! This is my command!

He catches her eye. Stops. Frannie puts the gun away. It's
getting noisy outside. More crap hits the chopper. Rachel
reaches for the door handle, her hand shaking.

RACHEL
Okay? Okay.

She slides it open and they step out into the bright NOISE.

INT. MILITARY TRIBUNAL - DAY

JUDGE-ADVOCATE 1
You told him them all to holster
their weapons.

RACHEL
Yes, sir.

JUDGE-ADVOCATE 1
Did you consider that wise,
Captain?

RACHEL
Wise? Sir, we were there to
protect and serve. These people
were not our enemy. Hearts and
minds, that's what every officer
said, hearts and minds.

JUDGE-ADVOCATE 1
You knew they were not the enemy.

RACHEL
Well, I did believe so at the time,
yes.

JUDGE-ADVOCATE 1
Even though almost every American
death since the occupation -

JUDGE-ADVOCATE 2
Sir, not occupation -

JUDGE-ADVOCATE 1
Oh fuck that -

JUDGE-ADVOCATE 2
Sir, we have a court record.

JUDGE-ADVOCATE 1
(beat)
Your honor, please ask the court
reporter to strike back to every
American death -

ARTICLE 32 OFFICER
So instructed -

JUDGE-ADVOCATE 1
Even though almost every American
death since the end of initial
hostilities has been caused by IEDs
delivered by insurgents dressed as
civilians -

RACHEL
Yes sir. Even though. Otherwise
you have Haditha -

JUDGE-ADVOCATE 1
Strike that. Your honor,
irrelevant and inadmissible.

ART BARNS
Objection -

ARTICLE 32 OFFICER
Overruled.

PIANO MUSIC rises...

EXT. ARMY BASE - DAY

The PIANO carries over. Rachel and Art Barns walk in dress uniform out of the building. The sun is blazing. Rachel turns. Sees Mabel, Joseph's wife.

MABEL
I want to know. I want to know
what it was like in his last days.

ART BARNS
Ma'am, ma'am, stay away.

MABEL
I want to know what it was like for
him!

Rachel watches as he escorts her, upset, to her car.

DAN'S VOICE
You know why you lost her? I'll
tell you why you lost her!

INT. RACHEL & DAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

They're having an argument.

RACHEL
Why are you undermining me with
her!? Ever since I've been back!

DAN
Because it's starting all over.

RACHEL
Starting? What's starting?

INT. INTERLOCHEN CONSERVATORY CLASSROOM - DAY

Eight students sit in desks. A baby grand piano sits in the front of the class. Shahrooz speaks.

SHAHROOZ

What is the one thing that
separates the masters from everyone
else? Hmm? Is it technique?

EXT. INTERLOCHEN CONSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS

Clara rides her bike up toward the admissions office, her
cheeks wet with tears.

INT. INTERLOCHEN CONSERVATORY CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Shahrooz lectures on.

SHAHROOZ

No. Is it discipline? No. Is it
some ineffable genius?

Outside, he sees Clara pulling up by the admissions building
on her bike. The sight completely throws him off.

SHAHROOZ

Is it, uh... Hem. Excuse me. Pull
out your advanced theory books...

INT. INTERLOCHEN CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Shahrooz runs down the long corridor.

EXT. INTERLOCHEN CONSERVATORY ADMISSIONS OFFICE - DAY

Clara walks up to the desk. The surly clerk comes up.

CLARA

I need to withdraw my application.

EXT. INTERLOCHEN CONSERVATORY - DAY

Shahrooz heads across the mall toward admissions. Clara
comes down the steps. Shahrooz breaks into a jog.

SHAHROOZ

Clara! Clara!

She looks up as he arrives.

SHAHROOZ

Don't quit.

CLARA

I'm sorry.

SHAHROOZ

Clara, you're 18. She can't make you quit unless you want to.

Clara turns away.

SHAHROOZ

You are the most talented pianist I've ever seen. Yeah, you need work, you need to put passion into it, but you've got it. It's just putting it together. Please. Let me help.

CLARA

I signed up for basic training. It starts in two weeks.

He shakes his head. But suddenly, he's Rachel. She's dressed in his clothes, and full of maternal worry.

RACHEL

Don't. Please.

CLARA

I gotta go.

She gets on her bike and tearfully rides away.

INT. RACHEL & DAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Rachel and Dan continue their argument.

DAN

That's why! You're crushing her and you can't even see it! You're crushing me! You're like, like this macho dude, you have to swing your weight around here -

RACHEL

Swing - I'm trying to fit back in!

DAN

By sending your daughter to Iraq!? I can't even believe you!

RACHEL

I'm not sending her to Iraq - she'll get four years of college, officer training and law school -

DAN

This is over my dead body - or
yours, I don't care -

RACHEL

(stunned)

I'm just trying to help her avoid
mistakes - I'm desperate, Dan, I'm
desperately afraid she's making a
huge mistake -

DAN

What is the big deal? Like our
family is a big mistake? Like our
marriage is a big mistake? Is that
what you're saying?

(she can't answer)

You wanna know what's so bad? It's
you. You're the one who hasn't
been tuned in here, Rachel, so, so
you just get a clue here.

It's too pathetically self-absorbed. She climbs to a bellow.

RACHEL

Get a clue? I'm going through the
most fucking stressful time of my
god damned life, and neither one of
you are there for me, and you're
telling me it's me who's not tuned
in? Well get this. I am tuned in.
I'm tuned in to your little
shenanigans mister, and I have been
for a long time. But I stayed in
this thing for our daughter, and
out of respect, RESPECT, for you
and your standing in the community,
and the least either of you could
do is show a little fucking
loyalty, and a little fucking
understanding of what I might be
going through!

Dan's fiddling with some cuff links on the bureau, not
looking at her, steaming mad.

DAN

I, I hear you there. Okay? Loud,
loud and clear, Rachel. But the
features of this relationship are
too complicated to go over right
now. I agree that we've got some
talking to do, and I've wanted to,
begged to practically, since you
been back.

(MORE)

DAN (cont'd)

I'm not going to cast an aspersion here, honey, but you have been a little, wrapped up, yes wrapped up is the word, with good cause, with good cause.

RACHEL

Aspersion! What is that!? Why do you talk like that!? Putting a fucking fancy covering on everything, I can't take it right now! This fake life! I wanted love!

DAN

It's not like you've been exactly reaching out here. I mean, don't complain about the mote in the other guy's eye until you take the plank outa your own, okay?

His weak jaw is shaking with rage. His black eye is turning green. Rachel turns away, smoking, and stares out the window. He continues to dress, and daubs some of her make-up on his eye, and begins pulling his eyelid back. Rachel gets a puzzled look on her face.

RACHEL

Dan?

We move in CLOSE and he pulls his eyelid impossibly far open and we MATCH CUT to:

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

Rachel's top lid is clamped back now, exposing her full eye.

DOCTOR 2 (O.S.)

I uh, I don't know if I want to do this.

He's looking upset down by Rachel's lovely, prepped abdomen.

DOCTOR 2

I uh. I knew her in high school. She used to be so full of life.

DOCTOR 1

Aye, Ron, why didn't you say something to me? Go. Please.

CLOSE ON Rachel's pinned-open eye. A tiny tear collects in the corner, unnoticed. We PULL BACK and see...

INT. GIL-MOR MANOR NURSING HOME - DAY

Rachel walking down the long corridor, carrying a bouquet of flowers. Painful sunlight bounces over the vinyl tile floor.

RACHEL'S VOICE
Sometimes everything seems to be
going to shit.

Rachel stops and sees herself in the mirror. The flowers catch the light in a way that captivates her with their beauty. On the table, a Bible, Koran, and Bhagavad Gita. She smiles and inhales deeply from the flowers, then takes a flower out and lays one on each book.

RACHEL'S VOICE
And then you realize that life is
so beautiful, and the most
important things are so simple.

She moves and the sunlight in the mirror blazes...

INT. GRANDMA ROSS'S ROOM - DAY

... and we make out Grandma Ross, snoozing in a chair under a knit blanket. She opens her red eyes. Rachel draws a chair.

GRANDMA ROSS
You.

RACHEL
Hi mom. How are you?

GRANDMA ROSS
How do you think I am? How am I.
I got an enema up my ass for three
days. It's a fetish for them.

RACHEL
I'll talk to them about it. I
brought you flowers.

GRANDMA ROSS
(taking the flowers)
So you're back. You look lost.

Rachel's suddenly moved to tears by this observation.

RACHEL
It's like I left and the water
closed behind me. I think I'm
becoming obsolete.

But Grandma's gone again, fidgeting with her blanket.

GRANDMA ROSS

Well join the club. That daughter
of mine never comes. She doesn't
have the guts.

RACHEL

Mom, I'm your daughter. I'm here.

GRANDMA ROSS

Who?

RACHEL

It's me, Rachel.

Grandma Ross peers at her. After a moment:

GRANDMA ROSS

Well you're not my Rachel. You're
too old.

RACHEL

It's me.

GRANDMA ROSS

Well where is your father?

RACHEL

What?

GRANDMA ROSS

Your father, girl. Go get him.

RACHEL

Mom, dad's dead.

GRANDMA ROSS

Pshhh. You. You always give me
trouble, you know that?

RACHEL

I don't mean to.

GRANDMA ROSS

You. Fall and hurt yourself, the
least little scrape. I told you
never to go into our bedroom with-
out knocking, didn't I? Didn't I?

Rachel's looking at her, trying to remember.

GRANDMA ROSS

Well your father's a coward, and
you are too.

RACHEL

What?

GRANDMA ROSS

Your father's a coward, and you,
are, too.

Rachel's overwhelmed with emotion, but she's still gentle.

RACHEL

I uh. I've got to go.

She hurries toward the door, holding back tears, and smiling.

RACHEL

Bye mom. I love you.

GRANDMA ROSS

Love. Posh.

CORRIDOR

Rachel hurries back the way she came, the angry sunlight
bouncing harshly off the mirror.

INT. RACHEL'S CAR - DAY

She drives, weeping. As she moves down the street she spots
a familiar SUV parked in the driveway of a house for sale.
Dan. She daubs her eyes, pulls in. Collects herself.

EXT. HOUSE FOR SALE - CONTINUOUS

Rachel gets out and moves up the walk.

INT. HOUSE FOR SALE - MOMENTS LATER

She enters and looks around. There's a MUFFLED, RHYTHMIC
SOUND coming from somewhere.

RACHEL

Dan? It's Rachel - I need to talk -

DAN

Rachel! Wow!

He's at the top of the stairs in his selling sweater vest.

DAN

How did you find me?

RACHEL

I'm sorry, are you showing? I just need - can we get lunch, maybe? I just, I just feel like everything's drifting apart -

Just then JUDY, 28, blonde, petite, steps out from the bedroom wing. Rachel tries to take in this new information.

JUDY

Uh, hi.

DAN

Honey, this is my, associate, Judy Briarson.

JUDY

We're just getting the home ready for a few showings. Tidying up a bit.

RACHEL

Oh.

JUDY

I'm new.

RACHEL

Well. I've uh. I've got some things to do. I'll just see you later.

DAN

Okay.

Dan smiles his "you got a deal" smile from the top stair. Rachel looks at Judy and nods. The back of Dan's shirt tail is hanging out from under his sweater, barely noticeable.

She turns and steps out into the blinding sun...

INT. BASE CANTEEN, COMBAT SUPPORT HOSPITAL, IRAQ - DAY

Joseph sees Rachel playing cards at a back table. She sees him as she's folding in her hand. She cashes out and pats the officer next to her on the back, makes some joke they all laugh at, and leaves. She's got a sense of command.

She glances cautiously toward Joseph and heads out into...

THE COURTYARD

She moves along a covered walkway. Iraqis cast dark glances at her. Some guys hide their beers. Joseph follows her.

She picks up her pace and rounds a corner. Climbs some stairs. In a half-enclosed hall now. Gorgeous mosaic floor. She hears him MOUNTING THE STAIRS. She tries a door, enters -

RACHEL'S QUARTERS - DAY

We recognize this place. Arched windows look out over the slope of the desert city. Muslin curtains filter the hot sun. The door opens and he's on her - She fights him back -

RACHEL
I didn't want to do this again.

JOSEPH
Then you shouldn't have.

RACHEL
I could have you arrested.

He kisses her again. She likes this and she doesn't.

LATER

Rachel and Joseph lie naked on the bed. She watches his bare bottom as he stands by the windows and lights a smoke.

JOSEPH
You gonna leave him when we get back?

RACHEL
No. This is a mistake and I pray to God they don't pay for it.

She sees his cigarettes. Lights one. Coughs. Puts it out.

RACHEL
God I'm glad I quit.

He exhales.

JOSEPH
It's a dirty country, this place.
Fucking dust over everything.

He's in the blowing camel muslin. Looking out the windows. Rachel sees his lips, his rippling shoulders, his muscled thighs. She lets out a sigh and closes her eyes.

EXT. INTERLOCHEN, WISCONSIN - DAY

The tree leaves shake and blow in crazy shudders. Clara runs on the roadside. Shahrooz's car slides up beside her.

CLARA

My mom doesn't want you over.

SHAHROOZ

We'll play at my parents' house.

Clara looks at him. Keeps running.

SHAHROOZ

I'll wait for you around that corner. If you don't want to, just keep running. Okay?

He pulls around a corner and parks. He sits, looking in the rear view mirror. Nervous.

SHAHROOZ

You're stupid, Sha Sha.

He looks back in the rear view mirror. Clara runs past. He exhales. Well. Damn. She's not coming. He shifts into gear. Suddenly there's a knock on the passenger window.

CLARA

What will your parents think?

SHAHROOZ

They'll be fine.
(off her look)
I'm saving to buy a house.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

The nurse wheels in the coolers. Both of Rachel's eyes are propped open now with clamps.

Doctor 1 picks up a marker off the abdominal tray, pulls the cap, and draws an incision mark from Rachel's belly button straight up between her breasts to the hollow of her neck.

NURSE

Why are you marking the incision?

DOCTOR 1

Because I'm a surgeon, not a coroner.

INT. ALAMI HOUSE - DAY

MUSIC tumbles out of the baby grand. Clara plays, Shahrooz seated on the bench beside her.

SHAHROOZ

Better.

We PULL BACK and see Asad standing with a cup of tea, watching blankly. First Shahrooz, then Clara glance up at him, and he smiles politely. But after their eyes move back to the music and the keys, his face falls again.

As the piece climaxes, Shahrooz leaps out of his seat, and begins to cheer her on like she's a race horse.

SHAHROOZ

That's it... That's it... now go!
Hard to the end. Pump it! The
passion!

Clara reaches deep down and finds something she didn't know she had. Her face sets, her jaw slackens, and she pounds out the final measures with a new power.

Asad turns away. Mahi passes him, carrying a tea tray. She glances up at him, a warning glance. He shrugs, like "what?"

SHAHROOZ

Yes!

CLARA

You think?

SHAHROOZ

Yes!

(She laughs)

Dah dah, dah dah, dah dah dah dah!
Bom!

She plays the last resounding NOTE again. There is a quiet clearing of the throat. Mahi stands with tea on a tray.

MAHI

You will of course stay for dinner.

INT. RACHEL'S CAR - DAY

Rachel pulls over and wipes her eyes. They are painfully light sensitive. She fumbles for some sunglasses. She looks across the street. Sees a SVEN & LENA'S GROCERIES.

RACHEL

Frozen Gourmet my ass.

INT. SVEN & LENA'S GROCERIES - DAY

Rachel patrols the aisles to MUSAK. A retired man gives her a hard expression. In the meat department, an ANGRY WOMAN picks up a pack of ground beef and shoves it in her face.

ANGRY WOMAN

Is that what they looked like?
Those men you killed? Is that what
they looked like?

The woman flips the beef in her cart and storms off. Rachel looks around. Everyone in sight is either looking at her or pointedly not looking. It's too much.

RACHEL

What!? You just want to believe
the negative, don't you!? This is
America! This, is, America, and we
presume innocence!

She takes the meat out and throws it into the meat bin.

RACHEL

Fuck!

People begin moving on. A soft MAN comes up to her.

MAN

I'm sorry.
(Rachel nods)
Just ignore them.

OUTSIDE

At her car Rachel notices a young couple, maybe 21, 22, near the store's side wall. They look happy, full of the hope that she's struggling to recapture. Kissing.

She sees the girl's holding a joint. The guy laughs and leans back, picks up a guitar off his car hood. Rachel notices a huge red ball on the antenna. He goes down on one knee. Sings Herb Alpert. The girl laughs.

GUY

This guy's in love. This guy's in
love with you. There's just no
one, no one that looks the way you
do, tell me how -

RACHEL

No no, please. Keep going.

GIRL

Can we help you?

RACHEL

I uh. Don't you live on West
Sycamore Street?

GIRL
Who are you?

RACHEL
(to the guy)
You dropped her off.
(to the girl)
Latin music. I live at 414 West
Sycamore.

GIRL
Oh. Sorry.

RACHEL
I serenaded my husband once when I
was your age.

The girl surreptitiously drops the joint, moves to step on
it, but Rachel notices.

RACHEL
Don't do that.

GIRL
Oh my God, don't tell me you're a
cop.

Rachel picks it up. She takes a hit. Explodes in a coughing
fit. The couple exchange glances and start laughing.

RACHEL
It's been sixteen years.

Led Zeppelin picks up OVER, WHOLE LOTTA LOVE...

EXT. DUMPY HOUSE - DAY

Led Zeppelin plays on the CD player. Rachel and the couple
sit on a filthy sofa in a ramshackle garage. The girl passes
a bong to Rachel.

RACHEL
My husband and I used to smoke pot.

GIRL
Get outa here!

RACHEL
(smiling, remembering)
Yeah. We used to do a lotta, crazy
stuff...
(tokes)
Do you think love is a feeling, or
is it an act?

GIRL
Whoah. Break out the acid.

Rachel laughs as the guy opens an old paint can.

GUY
I only do ounce bags.

RACHEL
Oh that's great, I love the paint
can. I used to hide it in this
hollowed out copy of Wuthering
Heights. My mom thought I was
obsessed with Heathcliff.

She laughs uproariously. The girl catches it. The guy comes
over, kneels and plays his guitar with the Zeppelin song -

GUY
Way way down inside, woman, you
need...lovvvvvvve...

They laugh and laugh, until Rachel's sides ache and she
cries. The ZEPPELIN carries over...

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

A tear of mist runs down the side of Rachel's face. The CD
player plays ZEPPELIN. The Doctor looks at the clock.

DOCTOR 1
We gotta go or these'll be no good.

INT. SUV - DAY

Dan, weeping, drives toward the hospital.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Doctor 1 sits down with Clara and Shahrooz.

DOCTOR 1
I understand you're waiting for
your father to get here. How far
away is he?

CLARA
I don't know, about twenty minutes.

DOCTOR 1

I have to make a decision. I want to respect your loss, but, I need to make the donation now for the organs to be viable. I'm afraid we may not have time to wait until your father arrives here. Okay?

RACHEL'S VOICE

Clara, no....

Clara nods.

DOCTOR 1

Okay.

INT. VA MEDICAL CENTER - DAY

Rachel in a VA PSYCHIATRIST'S office.

RACHEL

Sometimes you just have to say fuck it, you know? It's all over.

INT. RACHEL'S CAR - NIGHT

Rachel sits in her car. She looks at the baggie of weed and takes out some rolling papers. Shahrooz's car pulls in three houses behind. Rachel lights the spliff. ZEPPELIN plays.

INT. SHAHROOZ'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

SHAHROOZ

My dad told me today he wants me "to marry a good Persian girl."

CLARA

My mom's nervous too. Sometimes I want to kill her.

SHAHROOZ

You don't mean that.

The kiss is tender. Romantic. She closes her eyes.

CLARA

I don't know if we should do this.

SHAHROOZ

I can't stop thinking about you.

CLARA

Me neither.

SHAHROOZ
Maybe if we got them together...

INT. RACHEL'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Rachel bobs her head, exhales, and sings with the radio...

RACHEL
And I'm proud to be an American,
cause at least I know I'm free...

There's a distant THUMP as Shahrooz's car door closes. She sees car lights come on and a car pull away. Sees Sharooz.

RACHEL
What the hell?

She draws a big hit as she looks back, and sees Clara walking up the sidewalk toward home. She explodes in a coughing fit.

RACHEL
Shit.

She pinches the spliff, burns her fingers, drops an ember on her pants, yells and jumps up as it burns her lap, swatting.

CLARA

hears the loud music. Sees her mom's car rocking, hears her mom's YELLING, sees her swatting around.

CLARA
What the hell?

Rachel climbs out, followed by a cloud of smoke.

CLARA
Mom?

RACHEL
(trying for sternness)
Young lady, what
(begins to laugh, stops)
Were you doing with him!?

CLARA
(mystified)
Where's dad?

RACHEL
I don't know, fuckin his
"associate" I imagine, now are you
going to answer me!?

CLARA

He's probly got a showing. God, I
can't believe you're fucking
smoking pot!

RACHEL

I'm, I'm not!

Rachel laughs, tries not to. Clara laughs, tries not to.

RACHEL

Don't! Don't you laugh at me!
(Her laugh becomes a sob)
I just don't want you to fall for
the first guy you meet and sleep
with. That's not love.

Clara rolls her eyes and walks away.

RACHEL

Clara! I'm just trying to save you
from a terrible mistake!

CLARA

(whirling on her)
Like you made having me?

RACHEL

(stunned; recovers)
You gotta give me a another chance.

CLARA

You don't deserve one.

She turns toward the door.

RACHEL

Clara! There's, there's like this
time when the mothering is supposed
to end and the friending's sposed
to begin. I, I just don't know
where to start.

Clara's suddenly moved. But then the olive branch vanishes.

RACHEL

I think I'd kill myself, if I lost
you too.

CLARA

Well that's just like you. Pull a
fucking head trip like that on me.
Why don't you just go ahead. It's
all about you anyway. I shoulda
known better.

She turns and marches into the house.

RACHEL
Well that went well.

She plops back down in the car. Pounds the dashboard.

RACHEL
Shit.

She throws the joint out. Something's wrong with the sky. The moon is becoming unbearably bright. She fumbles for her sunglasses. The world starts blasting with flashes of light.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

Rachel's eyes are clamped open. The doctor's monacle glints with his own eye as he places the scalpel to her cornea.

DOCTOR 1
Mist.

The nurse squirts. He pushes slightly and the scalpel indents, then pushes through the surface tissue of her iris. He slices slowly around.

EXT. WATSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Suddenly the sky itself seems to split, and the outline of a door tears through it, blazing light, her mind reinterpreting the incision... Rachel SCREAMS and the outline becomes the door to the auditorium at Interlochen...

RACHEL'S FATHER (V.O.)
The crystal door.

RACHEL
(calling for help)
Clara!

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

A small welling of blood, very light, follows the cut.

NURSE
Why is there blood?

DOCTOR 1
Just residual. Eyes'll really bleed if the system's under pressure.

He slowly, carefully peels the outer tissue back in a flap, exposing the cornea.

INT. ALAMI FINE RUGS - DAY

A million swirling flakes of light, like snow or ash, coalesce into the store. It's beautifully lit with brass Turkish lamps. Mabel tends the store. Her eyes dampen when she sees Rachel. Rachel holds a note from Mabel in her hand.

MABEL

Thank you for coming. You can't be a coward to come see me.

RACHEL

How can I help you?

MABEL

Please.

They sit. Rachel suddenly raises a hand to her temple, the pain from the hospital breaking through her consciousness.

MABEL

Are you all right?

RACHEL

Just, stabbing pain all of a sudden.

Mabel sits and waits for her to refocus. Rachel looks up and smiles. Nods.

MABEL

I just...

She clasps her hands and smiles back angry tears. Her eyes are red-rimmed. She's struggling with her anger and grief, hoping that talking to Rachel can quell her growing insanity.

MABEL

Do you believe in God?

RACHEL

I'm sorry.

MABEL

It's a simple question, really.

RACHEL

I don't know what to believe, right now.

MABEL

Can I show you some pictures? I just can't seem to stop looking at these, old pictures. If I was blind I think they'd be seared in my head.

Rachel stares at her and sees her skin drying and becoming pale. Blood dried under her chin.

MABEL

Did you read the whole card?

She's pointing to the note she sent asking Rachel here.

MABEL

(from memory)

"O death the healer, scorn thou not, I pray, to come to me: of cureless ills thou art the one physician. Pain lays not its touch upon a corpse."

(begins crying)

I find that particularly helpful, in trying to cope. Life is naught without pain. He uh. He wrote me you know. About you. He said that the love of couples was the only thing to create safety and stability in the war, that it kept him sane. But I think it's driving me crazy.

RACHEL

I'm sorry. I don't think this was a good idea.

She rises, hand to her temple, but Mabel grabs her arm.

MABEL

I need to know! I need to know what his last days were like! What he ate! I want to hear how you fucked him, I want you to describe it to me - his cock in you - I want you to tell me what they did to him! Tell me what they did to him!

Rachel tears away and heads for the door - but Mabel grabs her again.

MABEL

Kiss me. Like I'm him, I want you to kiss me - fuck me - please -

Rachel SHOVES her back and heads for the door, the scene flashing with brilliant flashes, a glimpse of a scalpel.

MABEL

Please stay. I won't hurt you. I won't hurt you.

RACHEL

I can't. I'm sorry.

EXT. ALAMI FINE RUGS - NIGHT

Clara's there. Rachel sees her as she exits.

RACHEL

Oh thank God -

CLARA

Mom, the crystal door!

She points behind Rachel. Glowing. The auditorium door. Shapes and colors of the hospital waiting room and Clara move non-descriptly behind it. Rachel takes a step toward it and suddenly all that's left is the door to Alami fine rugs. She pulls it open, and the whole scene blazes white.

EXT. CHOPPER - DAY

Rachel and her crew step out of the UH-1 into the blinding light.

The crowd of civilians is very angry, and growing.

YOUTH

Infidels!

He throws a brick. It hits Joseph in the face.

OLD MAN (subtitled arabic)
No, no! Please!

JOSEPH

Shit!

A thrown US AID food can smashes into Rachel's head. She sees another flash of white. A scalpel.

BOOTIE

Fucken ragheads.

They all draw their guns. Train them on the crowd.

FRANNIE

You all right, Captain?

RACHEL (subtitled Arabic)
 All right, please to back away!
 All right, please to back away!

FRANNIE
 They're not listening.

JOSEPH
 You sure you got the right words?

Bootie's checking his book.

RACHEL
 I think so.

Blood is running down the side of her face. Suddenly another brick sails in, SMASHING Bootie in the neck.

BOOTIE
 God damn it!

Joseph sees a youth running, maybe 13. The old man is still pleading with the crowd. Suddenly, Joseph sees another one with a black pipe - or is it a gun? It is a gun! The crowd clears momentarily, Joseph has a shot - B A N G !

RACHEL
 No!

The kid, maybe 12, drops. Blood spurts from his neck. In his hand, his weapon: a black aluminum baseball bat. It says YANKEES. The ball rolls out. He is the boy in blue. It's all in slow motion -

Joseph aims into the crowd, thinks he sees another assailant, shoots - BANG! - hits a man in the shoulder - blood splatters into the air -

RACHEL
 Stop it! Stop it!

He turns. Sees her. Her gun now trained on him. Snap!
Back in real time.

RACHEL
 Stop! That's an order!

Joseph sees the dead boy in blue, the injured man. He shakes his head. Confused.

RACHEL
 Put the gun down! All of you!

She turns to Bootie and Frannie. The old man closes his eyes.

RACHEL

Do it!

They shake their heads. Rachel sees she must defuse the situation. She puts her own gun away. Turns to the crowd.

RACHEL

He's sorry, okay? It was an accident. We're trying to help.
(in Arabic, subtitled:)
We're trying to help you.

Bootie and Frannie slowly lower their weapons. Joseph shakes his head. Suddenly, the crowd rushes them.

JOSEPH

No!

Rachel turns, sees it. BANG! BANG! Joseph shoots two more people - blood flying - before he's wrestled down - Then the crowd is on her too, she's down, being beaten - and beaten -

INT. RACHEL & DAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rachel sits up and SCREAMS!

DAN

What! What!

Out of instinct he puts a hand over her mouth - she fights -

DAN

Honey! Honey!

He lets her go and turns on the light. Her eyes are black.

RACHEL

Get away! Get away!

DAN

It's okay. It was another bad dream.

Rachel's eyes clear, focus. Her panting slows. She sits back against the head board. Gasping. Cries.

DAN

Jesus.

He flops down, his back to her. He turns off the light. Her eyes gleam in the twilight. She calms.

A CAR STEREO plays romantic Latin music outside. Rachel listens to the plaintive melody. Finally, she gets up.

Rachel goes to the window. Sees the car. It's old, with a big red ball on the top of the antenna. The door is open and the couple is making out in the street.

Rachel watches. Longing for love.

They can't bear to part. Finally they separate like an amoeba and the girl runs up the walk to her house. He does a little dance - Rachel laughs at that - and he drives away.

Rachel spoons back into bed behind Dan.

RACHEL

Don't leave me. Please don't leave me. I feel so alone, so horrible.

Her lips touch his neck, and stay there, long and sticky, her eyes closed. She licks him then, and kisses him again behind his ear. Her hand runs down him.

DAN

Not tonight.

He hunkers down away from her, rolling his shoulder to shut her away. She rolls back onto her pillow. Sighs. Stares up at the night.

INT. VA MEDICAL CENTER - DAY

Rachel sits in a room with the VA Psychiatrist. The light streams blindingly in from the window. She lifts her hand to shield it. The psychiatrist ignores her.

PSYCHIATRIST

The purpose of this examination is to evaluate your competence for your Article 32 hearing.

RACHEL

I understand.

She pulls out her smokes, light one up.

PSYCHIATRIST

Oh, smoking's not allowed in here.

RACHEL

I'm sorry.

She keeps smoking. The psychiatrist makes a note.

PSYCHIATRIST

Defiance. You want to talk about that?

RACHEL

Yeah, I'm a little defiant right now.

PSYCHIATRIST

And why is that?

RACHEL

You don't have any fucking clue, do you?

She blows smoke at him. The cloud fills the screen.

INT. RACHEL'S CAR - DAY

Rachel, smoking, climbs into her car. It's brilliant outside. The light bounces blindingly off her windshield. She grimaces as she cranks the fucker over, smoke burning her eyes. She throws her butt out the window, slams into reverse.

EXT. VA MEDICAL CENTER - DAY

Rachel peels out. The psychiatrist watches her out the window, shaking his head. It's a darkly overcast day.

INT. RACHEL & DAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

A bright sunny day outside. LED ZEPPELIN rocks the house. Rachel stands in front of the mirror in spandex. Sun bounces around the rim of the mirror. Is she still beautiful? She doesn't really give a fuck. She's got a joint going.

She looks at the rim of the mirror, closer. Suddenly noticing the line of reflected light.

RACHEL

like a crystal door.

The mirror swings open and we're...

EXT. SVEN & LENA'S GROCERIES - DAY

The Guy plays his guitar, except it's WHOLE LOTTA LOVE, and the girl is Rachel, but with her hair bobbed like the girl. He dances for her like a Chippendale Man, then...

INT. RACHEL & DAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

...he's there in her bedroom with her. She's got a joint going, dancing to the rhythm. She dances and grinds with him, sweating and throwing her hair, rockin out and caressing herself. The ZEPPELIN continues...

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

... over as we focus on Rachel's misted tearing eyes. One lies flat and deflated. The doctor carefully places her cornea into a small jar of solution. He picks up the scalpel and begins the incision on the other one.

INT. ALAMI FINE RUGS - SUNSET

Asad and Mahi tend to a customer in their Persian rug store.

ASAD

It's a very fine weave. Much superior to what is made today.

MAHI

Or you may prefer this one over here, it is paler.

The ZEPPELIN fades into PIANO KEYS, falling like rain...

INT. SHAHROOZ'S BEDROOM - SUNSET

It's coming from a portable CD player. The same Chopin piece. Shahrooz's picture on the CD cover. Shahrooz and Clara stand facing each other.

He kisses her lips, so softly. She melts into it.

SHAHROOZ

Life is passion. It's like water.
Feel it inside you. Play me.

They're moving in rhythm. Swaying. He touches her hip, moves to kiss her. She puts her head to his chest, breathing, trembling, her hand on his heart. She looks up... and kisses him.

She climbs on him as the music rises. They peel off clothes, kissing, moving to the rhythm. Tears stream down her cheeks.

The music slows. She stops. Breathes. Trembling. She steps back. Swallows. Her face is full. She opens her bra. Lets it fall. Slides down her panties. He looks smitten. Not by sex. By aesthetic, and passion, and love.

She steps toward him. She's like a bird, pale and delicate. He gathers her up in his arms.

On the bed, so gentle, all is slow curves, rising mounds, palpable nipples, navels and hips. The final chord intones.

RACHEL'S VOICE

Clara.

They lay still and quiet. As one. We move in CLOSE on the sheet music. A hand reaches in with a pen to sign it and...

INT. HOUSE FOR SALE - SUNSET

...Dan and Judy complete the signing of a purchase agreement at the home's kitchen counter with two BUYERS.

DAN

Okay. We'll present it tomorrow.

WOMAN

Do you have any feeling?

DAN

Well, it's a fair offer.
Competitive, but I'd say it's fair.
We'll just have to see what they
say.

She's frustrated. Should they have offered more?

WOMAN

Okay.

Judy shoots out a hand and smiles a you-betcha smile.

JUDY

Okay.

They shake. As she leads them to the door, Dan sits back on the living room sofa. Judy turns from the door and SQUEALS.

JUDY

I did it! I did it!

DAN

Yes you did, and it's a good price!

JUDY

It's a GREAT price! Come on! Ooh,
I wanna celebrate!

DAN

I probly oughta get home to my ball
and chain.

Judy drops moods with him, rubs his shoulder, all sympathy and shoulder to cry on.

JUDY

How is that going, Dan?

DAN

I don't know, she thinks we're
lovers, for Chrissakes.

(shakes his head)

You know I married my high school
sweetheart, and now it's like,
pschew - shoot right through each
other, never hit a thing.

Judy puts a hand on his thigh.

JUDY

That must be so hard.

He looks at her. Puts his hand on hers on his thigh.

DAN

Yeah.

She's shaking her head in sympathy, his hand moves hers up,
ever so slightly, and she climbs onto him - all lips and tits
and fucking machine. They turn and...

INT. SUV - SUNSET

Rachel and Dan, both 18, make out in the SUV outside Big Al's
garage. He fumbles to climb into her.

RACHEL

Dan...Dan. It's not a good time.

DAN

I think I love you.

Rachel's arms clench tightly around his neck at that, wanting
to believe this is love if she just wills it so. He slides
into her and as he thrusts she repeats it like a mantra.

RACHEL

I love you. I do. I do. I do.

EXT. HOUSE FOR SALE - SUNSET

Rachel sits in her car behind Dan's SUV, bitterly smoking a
joint. She shifts into drive and pulls out. Suddenly a huge
BLAST of lightning and we're at...

EXT. INTERLOCHEN CONSERVATORY - DAY

The Interlochen conservatory. Shahrooz's car parks along the
oak-lined drive. Clara's bike hangs out of the trunk. They
walk to the office, not noticing the pouring rain.

INT. INTERLOCHEN CONSERVATORY ADMISSIONS OFFICE - DAY

It's raining in here too, but no one notices it. The clerk is Dan, but he's dressed in her clothes and looks as sour and pickled as ever. Pretends they're not there.

SHAHROOZ

Excuse me, Betty?

CLERK/DAN

That's the name, Sonny, and the features of this house are about dreams. What do you want?

Shahrooz stands there, waiting for him/her to look up. Finally a BOLT OF LIGHTNING strikes the papers on his/her desk as s/he looks up, and the rain disappears. It never was, and the clerk is back to normal.

SHAHROOZ

Clara Watson would like to resubmit her application to audition.

CLERK

Application's closed.

SHAHROOZ

Except by faculty dispensation.

She studies him. Assessing him. Then smiles sourly.

EXT. INTERLOCHEN, WISCONSIN - DAY

Clara rides her bike along the roadside. She closes her eyes and smiles. She opens them, and looks around in joy at the beauty. She sticks her arms out, flying free...

CLARA

Woo-hooo!!! Wooooh! Woooh! Yeah!
Oh yeah! Oh yeah!

...singing along as Robert Plant sings..."Way way down inside, honey you need, I'm gonna give you my love, gonna give you my love, oh..."

INT. RACHEL & DAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Rachel sits depressed in her camel colored dress. Suddenly there's the sound of a car pulling up outside. We can see it's Shahrooz. The door opens downstairs.

SHAHROOZ (O.S.)

Hello? Mrs Watson?

Rachel hears him climb the stairs. She lights a smoke. The sun's rays catch the cloud like the rim of the crystal door, it's edges flashing with a silver lining of light... then it's just smoke in the sun again. Sharooz enters through it.

SHAHROOZ

Hi. I uh. I didn't feel right about you not being at the audition.

Rachel looks out the window. Her eyes burn and tear from the smoke. She squints it back and sucks down another drag. Shahrooz perches on the chair opposite her.

SHAHROOZ

I know you uh, you don't like me, and maybe with good reason. But Clara, she, she really values your opinion. It would mean a lot to her, if you were there. And if you don't go, I think it will hurt you both, forever. And I don't want to see that.

Rachel looks to him, meets his gaze for the first time.

IRAQI (v.O.)

Why did you put your gun down?

INT. IRAQI SECURITY COMPOUND - DAY

The Resistance Fighter stands, leaning over Rachel. She looks at him. Won't answer. His eyes fall to her wedding ring.

IRAQI

Do you love your husband?

RACHEL

What do you think?

He takes out her gun. Cocks it. Points it at her head.

IRAQI

Don't bullshit with me.

RACHEL

I made a commitment to him.

IRAQI

Is that it? You don't love him?

RACHEL

I love my daughter.

IRAQI

You come here and killing my family
because you want to escape your
fucking husband?

Rachel's crying. He's very angry, but controlled.

IRAQI

I'm just trying to understand, man.

He rubs the muzzle in her hair. Rachel breaks down and weeps.

RACHEL

I don't know what you want.

He takes a step away in front of her.

IRAQI

I want your heart, man.

He sits in front of her. We see only their legs and waists.
The gun in and out of shot. His voice is dangerous.

IRAQI

You know what death is? Death is
memories. Holding onto the past.
Forgiveness, letting go, is a life
force. "Ah" Say "Ah." Do it.

We slide up to see the gun is going into her mouth. She's
shaking intensely.

IRAQI

I don't have that, so I am no
longer a healer. Now, I cut off
people's heads. I sometimes talk
to them afterwards. They can still
hear for a minute. I apologize to
them. We do, monstrous things.
You. I. But we are only monsters
if we do not embrace the
monstrosities. If we do them with
no, feeling. No, justice.

She closes her eyes. Afraid. Shaking uncontrollably.

IRAQI

It must hurt me as it hurts you.
But not really.

But instead of shooting her, he clicks the clip release. The
clip drops out and he catches and pockets it. He ejects the
chambered shell. She gasps. He exhales noisily through his
nose. Then hands her the gun. She doesn't want to touch it.
He waves it at her, and she finally takes it.

IRAQI

You put your gun down, Rachel
Watson.

She looks at him, confused. She handles her own service
pistol. She looks up. He's looking away.

RACHEL

What about the others?

IRAQI

What about them?

RACHEL

Will you let them go too?

IRAQI

They're outside, waiting for you.
We got you a jeep. Get them the
fuck out of here.

She rises, holding the empty gun. She turns, and hobbles to
the steel door in her Muslim garb. Turns the lever handle.
It opens. She looks at him. He's lost in thought. She
steps through the door into the corridor.

The same layers of peeled and faded paint. Dirty floor.
Several men line the walls, heavily armed, aiming at her.

She takes one step, and then another, down the long hall
toward the outdoor light at the far end. Light plays around
the rim of the opening, as if it were a crystal door.

Out in the brilliance she can barely make out the shape of
the jeep, with Joseph, Frannie, and Bootie waiting, as if in
heaven. She steps out into the light...

EXT. SECURITY COMPOUND COURTYARD - DAY

...and walks toward the jeep.

CLOSE over the passenger section of the jeep. Rachel in BG.
A breeze flaps an article of clothing. We see Rachel
approaching. She begins to weep, uncontrollably, although
she's trying to keep it in, stay composed, keep walking,
don't look back. The Iraqis continue to keep their weapons
on her. Among them stands the unarmed Old Man.

The gunshot wounds to her men's heads look like they happened
the day before. Their eyes are open. The keys sway and
dangle. Rachel's breath shakes until the tremor takes over
her whole body, but she forces herself to get into the jeep.

The Iraqi calls from the dim corridor.

IRAQI

Rachel Watson! You tell them you
lowered your gun.

She reaches for the keys. Closes her eyes. Fires up the jeep. Swallows. These basic things. She shifts into drive. Tears streaming down her face, she looks ahead, and pulls out, doing her best not to lose her composure.

EXT. IRAQI DESERT - DAY

Rachel drives down the open road, staring straight ahead in her tunic, dead to feeling on a beautiful day, accompanied by the seated bodies of Bootie, Frannie, and Joseph.

She's stopped by a US Humvee who mistake her for a terrorist.

MARINES (IN ARABIC, SUBTITLED)

Stop! Get down! Get down! Get
the fuck down, bitch!

She gets out and drops to her knees in the sand - the marines are circling, nervous, guns pointed at her - and one flips his M-16 and butts her in the face SMASH!

FADE IN:

INT. MILITARY TRIBUNAL - DAY

Rachel is standing.

RACHEL

If we had shot everybody would they
be alive? Maybe. So you tell me.
What am I supposed to say to
people? Should I say that the war
is wrong, that they died for
nothing? Should I say that it was
my fault because I applied the
standards of justice and fairness
my country supposedly stands for?
I don't know. I wish to God I
knew. What am I supposed to say to
people?

The court is full of reporters and observers, all silent.

ARTICLE 32 OFFICER

After duly weighing all the evidence and sworn testimony presented before this tribunal, and considering the fact that Captain Watson was not on a combat mission, and that her unit did not crash in a combat zone but was rather the victim of a band of insurgents, and furthermore that Captain Watson's unit was surrounded by a crowd of civilians including unarmed men, women and children, I hereby find that there is insufficient evidence to justify proceeding to court martial. Charges dismissed.

With his BANG of the gavel, the courtroom erupts in cacophony. Art Barns slaps Rachel's back, but she's unmoved.

She gathers her things, then turns and walks out through the commotion. Someone opens the door for her, and light cracks around the perimeter.

EXT. FISHING PIER - DAY

She runs down the pier, and comes to the end, and there's no where further to run. The sun bounces harshly off the water.

She strikes out and the wall of the memory bubble she's in wiggles and ripples and makes a BIG DRUM SOUND.

RACHEL

I am in here! I am in here! I am alive! I am trapped in here and I want to get out! Can anybody hear me!? I want another chance!

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

The doctor finishes removing the other cornea.

CLARA'S VOICE

They don't hear you.

Rachel sighs in grief and looks away from the operating table.

RACHEL

I know.

They are standing in...

EXT. RACHEL'S FAVORITE PLACE - DAY

...a beautiful rolling pasture, a construct of her mind.

RACHEL
I'm not gonna get another chance,
am I?

She and Clara meet eyes. Clara gasps back tears.

RACHEL
It's just me and my dying memories.
I've been a fool, thinking I could
change anyone.

She looks up at Clara, suddenly overcome by love. She reaches up and strokes Clara's cheek.

RACHEL
I wish you were real.

CLARA
Me too.

RACHEL
(Laughs)
We'd have some great times
together.

CLARA
(Laughs)
Remember the time you blew off
working at the garage for a weekend
and we went to the state fair?

RACHEL
(Nostalgic)
God, I never knew how important the
little moments were. They're all I
have.

Clara reaches for her hand and smiles, come on...

EXT. STATE FAIR MIDWAY CARNIVAL - DAY

Clara and Rachel are hand in hand on the Midway. Clara's 7.
Rachel's 26.

CLARA
Can we go to the tilt-a whirl,
please?

RACHEL
Okay.

CLARA
Come on, skip with me!

Rachel starts to skip with her and laughs, stops.

CLARA
No, skip with me!

She starts again, and they make a lovely sight. She swoops Clara up in her arms, off the ground, and waltzes with her, around and around and around.

IN THE TILT-A-WHIRL

Clara and Rachel laugh and turn.

MIDWAY - LATER

They walk hand in hand, eating cotton candy.

CLARA
Mommy, how come you work in a garage?

RACHEL
I guess it's what your grandpa taught me to do.

CLARA
Grandma said you didn't love her even as a little girl.

RACHEL
She did!?

CLARA
Yeah, but Daddy said it was just stories on account of the altschulers and stuff, and that you probably loved her as much as I love you.

Rachel stops and squats in front of Clara.

RACHEL
Not as much, I hope.

CLARA
I think you should go see her.

Rachel looks in her eyes and nods. We hear Clara's PIANO...

INT. INTERLOCHEN CONSERVATORY AUDITORIUM - DAY

The place is packed with stodgy old types and classical musicians. Clara's fingers fall like a thunderstorm over the grand piano's keys, like flower petals, like naked loving caresses.

IN THE HALL OUTSIDE

Shahrooz leads Rachel down the corridor toward a stunning, glowing pair of stained glass doors to the auditorium. His brown hand pushes a door open and tries to lead her in but she stops outside. On the stage, Clara is like in a light of heaven, glowing as she plays, all the more now that she sees mom's here.

RACHEL

My God.

Shahrooz pulls her, but she waves to him, no.

RACHEL

No, it's too crowded... I don't want to disturb.

Clara glances toward her. Their eyes meet and Clara is deeply moved. Playing with tears, but with a fearless sort of abandon, she moves into her final bars at full power, her hair slashing, her heart in her fingers, now rat-a-tat machine guns, now soft kisses of fish.

Shahrooz sits in the back row. Rachel stands, holding the door open, watching.

IN THE CORRIDOR BEHIND RACHEL, the crimson curtains in a side entrance begin to slightly part, and the silver barrel of the Farsi-inscribed revolver slowly protrudes.

Rachel doesn't notice. She is filled with pride and awe at her beautiful and talented daughter.

Clara is reaching the piece's climax.

INSIDE THE IRAQI PRISON CELL, the steel door begins to open behind Rachel. She's naked, beaten, shaking with nerves.

BACK AT THE RECITAL, Rachel is happy. A tear streaks her cheek.

A gloved thumb cocks the hammer on the rather large revolver.

Clara reaches deep for the FINAL POWER CHORD, and Rachel's face is full of love.

RACHEL
You can do it.

B A N G !

The shot rings out. Rachel lifts off her feet suddenly from the force, her arms flung wide, as if leaping to an embrace of her daughter, as if hanging on the cross - she is BLOWN THROUGH THE CRYSTAL DOOR AND INTO THE AUDITORIUM -

A shower of red atomizes over the people in front of her. She's propelled forward and down onto the floor. A bullet splinters the side of the grand piano on stage. SCREAMING.

CLARA
Mom!?

Rachel lies in an impossible contortion, mostly face up, a blossom of crimson rapidly flowing out over her camel dress. The brown-skinned Doctor kneels. She sees Clara. She can barely speak - but she says

RACHEL
I love you.

INT. HOUSE FOR SALE - DAY

Dan and Judy preview a new listing. He lectures her.

DAN
See, we're in the business of selling dreams. This isn't a house, it's a dream. And this is a buyer's market, so we gotta position the dream, see. Everything is image. Structure, foundation, they'll talk about that but what sells a house, is what they see. So first thing you're gonna have to do is tell these people to clear all this clutter out. People hate it. We want it like a movie set. Simple. Dramatic. That's what sells. We're gonna want flowers and candles, and take some of the designer prints from the B collection at the office. They'll have to rent a storage garage, but we'll get 'em fifteen percent more.

An ambulance SCREAMS by outside.

DAN
(Looking out the window)
Busy street. Curtains here. Like
muslin.

INT. ALAMI FINE RUGS - DAY

Mahi takes a wad of cash from a customer. Smiles and moves the curtain to slip the money through the slot in the safe, and notices the revolver is missing. She looks up at Asad, worried.

The scene shimmers and glints off a windshield and we...

EXT. INTERLOCHEN CONSERVATORY - DAY

...PULL AWAY from the windshield bounce to see an ambulance, lights turning. Rachel's rushed on a gurney down the sidewalk, blood covering her beautiful dress.

She looks over and sees a car door hanging open. Small blue Toyota.

Inside, in the driver's seat, sits Mabel Miller. A self-inflicted gunshot-wound to the soft underbelly of her jaw has blown bits of red all over the ceiling of her car. Her hand hangs down, holding the silver Farsi-inscribed revolver.

Rachel's eyes flutter shut and they bang her gurney into the back of the ambulance, climb in with her and Clara and SLAM the doors.

EXT. RACHEL'S FAVORITE PLACE - DAY

Rachel sits with Clara on the rock in her favorite place. In her hand are still a few shimmering flat bubbles of memory.

CLARA
You're running out of time.

RACHEL
I know.

CLARA
What are you gonna do?

Rachel smiles suddenly, startlinging herself.

RACHEL
I'm gonna lower my guns.

She laughs at the simplicity of it, and turns to...

INT. GRANDMA ROSS'S ROOM - DAY

Sour old granny stares bitterly out her window. She glances over to see Rachel there.

GRANDMA ROSS
You don't know what you put me
through, girl, you and your father.

RACHEL
I know, mom. I wish I could have
been more like you.

GRANDMA ROSS
You never even tried, you were too
angry.

RACHEL
I know. I want you to know that
you're right. I've been a coward
my whole life, almost. I was
afraid and I hid behind my anger.
But I'm out of time, see, ma, and I
just want you to know that, all the
best parts of me, I got from you.

Grandma Ross sucks in air. Her eyes fill with tears. She looks to Rachel, afraid, but all she sees there is love. Rachel holds her.

RACHEL
I love you, ma. I love you. I
gotta go. Okay? Bless you, mom.

Rachel stands, turns, and as the memory bubble around her pops she steps into...

INT. HOUSE FOR SALE - DAY

Rachel walks through the house, down the hall, opens the door to the study, finds Dan on the sofa, fondling Judy's breasts.

RACHEL
Dan.

JUDY
Oh my God!

RACHEL
It's okay. I mean, it hurts.

Judy covers herself, backs away, fades out of the scene.

Rachel takes Dan's hands. Runs her thumb over the raised blue veins and hair on the back of one.

RACHEL

I'm sorry I helped us get so far off track. I uh, I was feeling lost in Iraq and I did the same thing. With Joseph, Mabel's husband.

(sees his hurt)

I know, I don't want to hurt you either. I just want you to know, that at the end of my life, you're the most important man I've ever known. I wish I could have told you that.

He looks at her, weeping, and nods his gratitude and regret.

RACHEL

I gotta go.

He nods.

RACHEL

Remember me.

She turns away, and she's...

INT. RACHEL & DAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

...sitting in her chair, staring out the window, wearing her camel dress. Outside in the hall she sees herself in her camel dress, arguing with Clara.

RACHEL

I don't want to smother you, I'm just trying to give you some guidance.

CLARA

Well I don't want your fucking guidance!

RACHEL

Don't you talk that way to me you little bitch! After all I've done for you!

CLARA

I don't want what you've done! All you've done since you've been back is fuck everything up! Why don't you go back to Iraq!?

RACHEL

Don't you run away from me! Clara!
You're just like your father! A
coward! A coward who runs away!

There's only distant weeping in reply. The SLAM of a door.
The Rachel who was arguing suddenly covers her face with her
hand, weeps herself.

RACHEL

What's happened to me?

She turns and comes into the room. She goes to the bureau,
opens her panty drawer, pulls out a flask. Then tosses it
aside. Stares at herself in the mirror.

RACHEL

Just kill yourself and do everybody
a favor.

Real Rachel, in the chair, sits and watches herself with
sadness and compassion.

REAL RACHEL

It's not that bad.

RACHEL

I've fucked everything up. Don't
tell me that.

REAL RACHEL

I wish you could see how beautiful
you are.

RACHEL

Everybody hates me.

REAL RACHEL

No, they just have their own
crosses to bear.

She walks over to the window, conscious only that she's
talking to herself.

RACHEL

I wish I could see it like that.

REAL RACHEL

Don't worry. You will.

Rachel turns and sits down right on top of seated Rachel, and
they become one.

She stares out the window. Outside a bird flits on the wire.
A bee buzzes by the window planter.

Sun streams in, but no longer painful. The curtains waft gently. A car horn HONKS outside. Shahrooz. Rachel becomes conscious of Clara.

CLARA

What does it take, ma, to get up there in front of a hundred people? And not fly around in some helicopter with a bunch of strangers you'll never see again, but what does it take to try to connect with people, to understand people that are maybe a little different, to put yourself out there? Huh? What do you think it will take in me, your daughter? Those people rejected me before, to them I'm just a skanky town girl with a commie coward unAmerican ma, and now thanks to Sha Sha I'm going back, and I'm going to expose my heart to those bastards all over again, and not just like before, I'm going to try and expose more of my heart, take more of a risk, just like I do with you.

(She's crying now)

What does that take, ma? What does it take to show love instead of hate? To put your pride and fear aside? What does it take? You can't answer me, can you?

Rachel looks at her but can say nothing.

CLARA

Stay here, cause I don't want you there today.

She turns and leaves. A moment later she runs out below. Talks to Shahrooz for a moment, who glances up to the window. He reluctantly gets in the car with her and pulls away.

RACHEL

(quietly)

It takes courage.

A tear lets go of Rachel's eye and runs slowly down her cheek, reflecting the world, hanging in space.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Doctor makes the harvesting incision, opening Rachel's beautiful torso.

The tunnel is opening up behind. Wider and wider. Bubbles of memories flow past, faster and faster, more and more, until they're like a river.

INT. WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Clara sits in tears by her on a sofa.

RACHEL

I love you, sweetheart. I know,
you're just a figment of my own
imagination. But you're wonderful,
and I know the real you is even
more magical than I ever knew.
Bless you both. Bless this whole
crazy, terrible, beautiful world.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Doctor removes a bloody organ, places it in a container.

DOCTOR 1

There's a new lease on life.

INT. WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rachel gasps in pain and fear. The last of the river flows past. Clara's crying and afraid. Rachel reaches out and holds her, and they dissolve into the river together.

The multicolored, silvery flow races down the rest of the tunnel, becoming the multicolored DNA xylophone her father and she met on, PLAYING the most beautiful PIANO/XYLOPHONE music of passion and sex and joy and god and pain...the Chopin ballad. And we go with it, racing down the roller coaster of life into death, feeling the blackness barrel closed behind us. Up ahead, the blinding light and - POW!!!

We're in space, and the world is hanging there like a living thing. Like a memory bubble.

RACHEL'S VOICE

(gently amused)

It's a messy place. There's so
much sadness and pain, but there's
so much wonder, and joy, that in
the end, all I can feel is this
immense gratitude for the horrible
disgusting mess I called... my
life.

BLACK.

The Chopin piece rises out of the darkness.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

Rachel's body lies at peace under a bloody sheet, the lights off.

INT. RACHEL & DAN'S BEDROOM - SUNSET

Clara curls up in a fetal position in Rachel's chair, hugging Rachel's night gown to her cheek, staring out at the sunset.

INT. KITCHEN - SUNSET

Dan takes two Frozen Gourmet dinners out of the freezer and is overcome by grief.

He hugs them to his chest and slides down the cupboards to sit on the floor. He weeps in big gaping sobs, white frost pouring out of the open freezer door.

INT. RACHEL & DAN'S BEDROOM - SUNSET

Hearing him, Clara's mouth wrinkles. She weeps and buries her face in her mother's crumpled nightgown.

EXT. WATSON HOUSE - SUNSET

Out on the wire, a bird lifts off and flies. We travel with it over home and culdesac, until they become grainy and camel-colored in the long evening light, and flow like...

CAMEL-COLORED SAND DUNES

We fly with the bird over them into a gorgeous Iraqi sunset. The bird's shadow transforms into the shape of Rachel's helicopter...it's beautiful.

RACHEL'S VOICE

(gently amused and awed)

They say hearing is the last sense to go, but for me it was all these dreams and memories.

As she speaks, the scene shifts and falls into other scenes of her life, collapsing on one another and reforming like a

KALEIDOSCOPE

- a mess of joy and blood and love and anger and sweat and flowers and filth and stars that is truly beautiful.

RACHEL'S VOICE

Like a kaleidoscope, they just rolled and shifted, until suddenly it wasn't a mess at all, it was the most beautiful pattern.

They rejigger and we see her walking toward us down the long xylophone of DNA. They turn again and suddenly we're in a memory - but it's from Clara's POV:

EXT. INTERLOCHEN CONSERVATORY - DAY

They're walking. Clara seems older, early or mid 20s. Her hair is no longer blue. Students pass her deferentially.

CLARA

I don't know what to do. I'm so afraid I'll screw it all up.

RACHEL

I know. I was too.

CLARA

What do you do?

RACHEL

The best you can. Try to lead from your heart and enjoy the moments.

CLARA

I wish I could have told you how much it meant to me that you came that day. I just never expected you to be gone so soon.

RACHEL

I know, darling. Believe me, I know... You're turning out to be a such a wonderful woman. I'm so proud of you.

Clara's eyes well with tears.

RACHEL

See you again?

Clara nods.

CLARA
One last ride on the Ferris wheel?

Rachel smiles and nods. Clara reaches for her hand and they're at...

EXT. STATE FAIR MIDWAY CARNIVAL - DAY

They sit down, hand in hand, and the rickety old Ferris wheel lifts them up away together, laughing.

RACHEL'S VOICE
And then I realized that my dad was
wrong. We're not alone.

We move in CLOSE on Clara, holding her mom's hand and looking over happily at her as they round the top of the Ferris wheel. They both squeal and close their eyes, and their cries cross fade into the sound of...

INT. CLARA & SHAHROOZ'S BEDROOM - MORNING

A CRYING BABY. We pull away from Clara's sleeping smile. She's next to Shahrooz, both a few years older and more tired, both with wedding rings.

RACHEL'S VOICE
We're connected by our dreams and
memories as strongly as by our DNA,
mother to child, man to woman,
around the world.

Clara moans and stirs. She groggily looks to the clock - morning, and gets bleary-eyed out of bed. She heads into...

INT. BABY YASMIN'S ROOM - MORNING

She shushes and cooches the newborn quietly and carries her to a rocking chair by the window.

RACHEL'S VOICE
And sooner or later, we all have to
answer the same question: what do
you want to leave behind?

She settles in, lowers her night gown and places the baby on her breast. Behind her hangs a framed poster: CLARA ALAMI at CARNEGIE HALL. On the open window sill there's a glass of sparkling water.

RACHEL'S VOICE
From where I sit, the only answer
is love.

Clara looks up from the baby, at peace. She notices how the bubbles in the sparkling water each catch the morning sun in a different color, like memories. Like dreams.

A new one forms. We follow as it lets go and jostles its way up through the hurly burly of bubbles, to the surface.

It shines beautifully for a brief instant.

And then it pops.