

“BIG LITTLE LIES”

Episode #1

“Somebody’s Dead”

Written By

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SETS LIST

INTERIORS:

MACKENZIE HOUSE

- DINING ROOM - NIGHT
- FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

WRIGHT HOUSE

- DEN
- KITCHEN - DAY
- TWINS' ROOM - NIGHT

EXTERIORS:

LA MESA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MORNING & NIGHT

- SCHOOL TERRACE - DAY
- PARKING LOT - DAY

MACKENZIE HOUSE, BACKYARD - EVENING

WRIGHT HOUSE, POOL - EVENING

JANE'S TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

BEACH - NIGHT **(FLASHBACK)**

FISHERMAN'S WHARF - DAY

CANNERY ROW, STREET - MORNING

CARMEL - SUNSET

BIG LITTLE LIES

"Somebody's Dead"

OVER BLACK WE HEAR WHIRRING SIRENS; IT CONTINUES AS WE FADE IN ON BLURRY FLURRIES OF FLASHING LIGHTS THROUGH A NIGHT MISTING FOG. AS WE COME INTO SOFT FOCUS:

1 EXT. LA MESA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - NIGHT

1

POLICE CARS, FIRE TRUCKS, AMBULANCES... THIS IS A CRIME SCENE. CLOSE ON A CAR DOOR BEING SHUT; QUICK PULL-BACK TO REVEAL DETECTIVE ADRIENNE QUINLAN, forties, QUICKLY MET BY PARTNER/COLLEAGUE DETECTIVE WALT GIBSON, also forties.

GIBSON

In the back.

QUINLAN'S POV

SNIPPETS, GLIMPSES OF PEOPLE IN COSTUME. NOTE: WE DO NOT SETTLE ON THESE PEOPLE, THEIR IMAGES ARE FAST, FLEETING...

RESUME GIBSON AND QUINLAN, ON A FAST MOVE.

QUINLAN

(re: all the people)

What is all this?

GIBSON

Some school fundraiser. Costume night, or something.

AS QUINLAN SURVEYS THE SURROUNDINGS, WE GET OUR FIRST GOOD LOOK. THE YARD IS LITTERED WITH ELVIS PRESLEYS RANGING FROM LATE TWENTIES TO MID-FORTIES; A BUNCH OF AUDREY HEPBURNS AS WELL, SAME AGE-RANGE, ALL SHAPES AND SIZES. A FORTUITOUS COSTUME FOR SOME OF THE WOMEN; LESS SO FOR OTHERS.

RESUME QUINLAN

as she looks back to Gibson

GIBSON (CONT'D)

(re: the back)

Victim's on the back terrace.

As they go--

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

1

QUINLAN
(no nonsense)
How contaminated is this scene?

GIBSON
They did a pretty good job of it.

As they round the building, Quinlan stops, stares at what we can only surmise is a dead body. A LOT OF MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS AT WORK BUT THERE'S NO PENDING EMERGENCY. WHAT'S DONE IS DONE.

GIBSON (CONT'D)
Already dead when we arrived.

Quinlan is close to him as he stares at the body. Finally--

QUINLAN
(softly)
My god.

SMASH CUT TO:

CLOSE ON GABRIELLE

late thirties, in what appears to be a police interrogation room. NOTE: ALL FREE-STANDING CLOSE-ONS ARE IN THIS SETTING.

GABRIELLE
It wasn't just the mothers. It was the dads, too.

CLOSE ON BONNIE

late twenties

BONNIE
(nurturing; sympathetic)
It was just a terrible misunderstanding. Hurt feelings, y'know?

CLOSE ON STU

forty

STU
I'll tell you exactly how it happened.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED: (2)

1

CLOSE ON GABRIELLE

GABRIELLE

He has no idea how it happened.

CLOSE ON HARPER

fortyish

HARPER

It started with the incident on
Orientation Day.

(adding)

And at the root of it was Madeline.

TIGHT ON MADELINE MARTHA MACKENZIE

forty, a whirlwind of a human being, quakes with good intentions, bright, bossy, and a Herculean talker. She speaks rapid-fire, perfect enunciation.

MADELINE

(sing-songy)

I am forty.

2 INT. MADELINE'S SUV - MORNING

2

REVEAL MADELINE, DRIVING; HER FIVE-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER, CHLOE is in the back of the SUV. Glittery, bossy, just like her mother; precocious beyond her years. WE'RE ON A WELL-TRAVELED ROAD IN MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA, BLUE SKY, BRIGHT SUN, it's a special day.

MADELINE

(sing-songy)

Foo-ur-tee!

CHLOE

(imitating Mom)

I am five. Fii-ii-ve!

MADELINE

(singing)

The most wonderful forty that one
can possibly be. Let the festival
of Madeline begin!

CHLOE

(to herself)

Oh, calamity.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

2

MADELINE
(like a circus M.C.)
First we have "Let's Get Kindy-Ready
Orientation," featuring -- if not
starring -- the one and only and
amazing Chloe Mackenzie.

SHE MAKES A "ROAR OF THE CROWD" SOUND. Chloe, mortified,
looks out the window.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Co-starring the ageless mother of
the amazing Chloe,
(sing-songy)
on her fortieth birthday -- smartly
outfitted in her new Dolce and
Gabbana stilettos
(CROWD ROAR)
bought online at thirty percent
off.
(BIGGER CROWD ROAR)
Then, continuing on with--

She suddenly jams on the brake, LEANS ON THE HORN, under--

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Hey!

REVEAL IN FRONT OF HER, A BLUE MITSUBISHI, TEEMING WITH
YOUNG PEOPLE, TEENAGERS.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Idiot!

CHLOE
Who's an idiot?

MADELINE
(rapid-fire; every
moment is a teachable
one)
You want to see how teenagers die,
Chloe, this is how it happens, they
turn sixteen and text themselves to
death, that girl in front of me is
driving her car and using her phone
at the same time, probably while
taking a selfie, 'cause that's what
happens, teenagers get sucked into
the abyss of narcissism, welcome to
the "look at me" world, I don't
want you growing up in a "look at
me" abyss, you understand?

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: (2)

2

CHLOE
(weary tone)
What are you babbling about, woman?

MADELINE LEANS ON THE HORN.

MADELINE
(YELLING OUT THE WINDOW)
Put down your phone!

CHLOE
(backing up her mother)
Idiot!!

THE MITSUBISHI'S PASSENGERS CRANE AROUND TO LOOK; THE
DRIVER SPIES MADELINE IN HER REAR-VIEW MIRROR, AS
MADELINE JAMS HER FINGER INTO HER PALM, SIMULATING
TEXTING.

MADELINE
It's illegal! It's against the
law!!

THE DRIVER, A TEENAGE GIRL, COOLLY EXTENDS THE FINGER:
"UP YOURS," with the poise of a veteran bird-flipper.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Right!

MADELINE THROWS THE CAR INTO PARK, JAMS ON THE EMERGENCY
BRAKE, AND IS OUT OF THE VEHICLE IN A FLASH.

CHLOE
(to herself; she's
seen this before)
Oh, calamity.

3 EXT. CANNERY ROW, STREET - CONTINUOUS

3

MADELINE STORMS UP TO THE OFFENDING CAR, BANGS ON THE
WINDOW. THE DRIVER, LORI, SEVENTEEN-ISH, WHITE SKIN,
SPARKLY NOSE-RING, CLUMPY MASCARA, SLIDES DOWN THE
WINDOW.

LORI
(to Madeline)
What is your problem?

MADELINE
You put down that phone. You could
kill yourself and your little friends
with all your...
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

MADELINE (CONT'D)
(she wants to say
"bullshit")
...nonsense, you want to rot in
jail or be dead?

MADELINE SNATCHES THE PHONE, THEN WINGS IT ONTO THE
FLOOR IN FRONT OF THE GAPE-JAWED PASSENGER.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
You must stop it.

Lori looks back at this alien. As MADELINE turns and
heads back, she HEARS THE EXPLOSION OF LAUGHTER FROM
WITHIN THE MITSUBISHI. Upon which, MADELINE NOTICES
ANOTHER CAR, STOPPED BEHIND MADELINE'S PARKED CAR; SHE
THROWS OUT AN APOLOGETIC WAVE, BEGINS TO TROT BACK TO
HER CAR, PROMPTLY FALLS DOWN. SPLAT.

CLOSE ON GABRIELLE

GABRIELLE
It's possible that had she not
fallen, nobody would've gotten
killed.

4 INT. CAMRY - MORNING

4

JANE, twenty-four, behind the wheel, her tired old Camry
idling behind the parked SUV. There's a palpable
fragility to Jane. No makeup, no effort made to draw
attention to herself. A hint of anxiety on her face;
through it all she oozes a fundamental kindness.
STRAPPED INTO THE BACK SEAT, HER FIVE-YEAR-OLD SON,
ZIGGY. Big eyes, the image of innocence and gentility.
He could pass for a puppet.

ZIGGY
Why is it stopped?

JANE
I don't know, baby. It seems the
driver is yelling at the car in
front of her.

ZIGGY
(tightening)
Why?

Ziggy is not good with conflict.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

4

JANE
I'm not sure, but... oh, here she
comes.

Upon which, MADELINE THROWS HER APOLOGETIC WAVE TO JANE,
THEN PROMPTLY TURNS HER ANKLE AND FALLS.

JANE (CONT'D)
Ouch.

ZIGGY
Did you hurt yourself?

JANE
No. The lady tripped, she just
fell down.

THE LIGHT CHANGES; THE MITSUBISHI ZOOMS OFF. JANE PUTS
ON HER SIGNAL, BEGINS TO NAVIGATE PAST THE PARKED SUV.

ZIGGY
Where are we going?

JANE
We don't want to be late for
Orientation.

ZIGGY
(ever the Good
Samaritan)
But shouldn't we make sure the lady's
okay?

JANE
Well...
(then)
You're right, we should.

JANE PULLS THE CAMRY OVER, DEBOARDS, under--

5 EXT. CANNERY ROW, STREET - CONTINUOUS

5

JANE
I'll go check on her, just wait
right here.
(calling to Madeline;
approaching)
Are you okay?

As Jane helps her up--

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

MADELINE

(rising)

I'm fine. I just rolled my ankle.

JANE

You should probably get ice on it.
And keep it elevated.

MADELINE

I've got to get to school. My
daughter's first day of kindergarten,
they have a thing about tardiness.

JANE

At La Mesa? That's where I'm going,
my son, Ziggy, is starting there.
We just moved here.

MADELINE

Ziggy? Like Ziggy Stardust? What
a great name.

(indicating)

That's my little Chloe, shrinking
from embarrassment right there, I'm
Madeline, by the way, Madeline Martha
Mackenzie. I only go by Madeline,
but for some reason I always mention
the Martha.

JANE

Jane. Jane-no-middle-name Chapman.

MADELINE

Nice to meet you, Jane-no-middle-
Chapman, I already like you and not
just because you stopped to come to
my aid, but because you're an
intrinsically nice person, I have a
barometer for this sort of thing.
Everybody's lives would be better
off with more nice people in them,
I've not only always believed it,
but I've said it aloud, and I'll
have you know I happen to be very
reciprocal when it comes to human
kindness.

Jane's not quite sure what to make of Madeline... but
she instinctively likes her, too.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED: (2)

5

CLOSE ON GABRIELLE

GABRIELLE

They immediately became a little team, those two.

(accusatory)

Two little amoebas, bonding. Like that brain-eating cancer thing.

6 INT. CAMRY - MORNING

6

Jane drives, Madeline rides, her injured foot elevated above the dashboard. Chloe sits in the back, next to Ziggy.

MADELINE

(rapid-fire)

I really appreciate this, I'm capable of driving myself, but after accosting a car full of teenagers on safety grounds, I'm a little loathe to operate heavy machinery with an injured foot, I have a little peeve when it comes to hypocrisy, I refuse to engage in that, I tell you, I'd sooner snorkel in my vomit.

CHLOE

(to Ziggy)

My Mom's an active talker.

As Ziggy stares back--

MADELINE

That's enough, Chloe.

ZIGGY BLINKS HARD, TWICE: A NERVOUS TIC HE HAS WHEN THINGS JUST DO NOT COMPUTE.

CHLOE

(to Ziggy)

I'm effervescent. Do you have an adjective you like to go by?

ZIGGY

No.

CHLOE

Timid, maybe? You seem like a nervous Neddie.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

MADELINE

Okay, Chloe.

CHLOE

(to Ziggy)

There's nothing to be scared about.
There aren't even that many rules
to follow. We have to wash our
hands before going into the
classroom. And we're allowed only
one paper towel.

AS ZIGGY BLINKS TWICE--

CHLOE (CONT'D)

No peanut butter allowed, 'cos some
kids are allergic. You can't even
have it in your lunchbox. I got
Dora The Explorer on mine. Who's
on yours?

Jane takes a deep breath of anxiety.

MADELINE

(to Jane)

You okay, hon?

JANE

We don't have a lunchbox yet. I'm
feeling a little overwhelmed.

(then)

Will he be teased if he brings his
lunch in a bag?

MADELINE

Okay, darling, you need to relax.
Ziggy will be walking in with Chloe,
that's like arriving with the golden
ticket. Your little man is dialed
in.

CLOSE ON DETECTIVE QUINLAN

perhaps a press conference of sorts.

QUINLAN

An autopsy is being conducted to
ascertain the exact cause of death,
but at this point we can confirm
that the victim suffered right rib
fractures, a broken pelvis, and a
fracture at the base of the skull.

7 INT. WRIGHT HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

7

Meet CELESTE WRIGHT, a tall, statuesque beauty, mid-forties, stunning. A little flustered at the moment. She's frantically trying to corral her FIVE-YEAR-OLD TWINS, JOSH AND MAX, as they scamper about the kitchen, firing Nerf missiles at each other.

CELESTE
C'mon, guys, put down the weapons,
we're going to be late.
(kneeling before Josh)
Let's get your jacket zipped, c'mon.

THUMP: A NERF MISSILE BOUNCES OFF HER FOREHEAD.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
(to Max)
Ow!! Put it down!!
(calling out)
Perry!!

JOSH
He's my POW.

CELESTE
Put down the gun, and grab your
jacket. We need to go.

Josh fires again, as PERRY, forties, suit and tie, Hollywood good looks, enters. THE MISSILE HITS CELESTE IN THE EAR.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Dammit.

PERRY
(to the Twins)
Hey, hey, hey! What did we say
about shooting Mom before I've had
my morning coffee?

As Max beams--

CELESTE
(to Perry)
You're not funny, can you help me
out a little?

PERRY
(pointing an imaginary
pistol at his boys)
Bang bang!

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

The TWINS DROP LIKE FLIES, PLAYING DEAD, it's a game they play.

CELESTE
(to Perry; hardly
amused)
Thank you.

PERRY
(to the Twins)
Up and at 'em, first one to the car
gets a dollar.

And THE BOYS POP UP; IN A FLASH THEY'RE OUT THE DOOR.

PERRY (CONT'D)
(to Celeste; charming)
See? You just have to offer them
money.

CELESTE
And what kind of message does that
send?

PERRY
(with charm)
I thought you liked my being a bad
influence.

CELESTE
On me. Not them.

A smile. A kiss. A loving look. Then--

PERRY
I wish I didn't have to go.

CELESTE
Me, too.

A look. Another kiss. This one a little hungrier...
his hand slides to her buttocks, this could lead to the
kitchen table, it has before. She breaks it off.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Kids are in the car, waiting.

PERRY
(mock contempt)
We never should have had them.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED: (2)

7

CELESTE
(fighting a giggle)
No. Perhaps we shouldn't have.

8 EXT. LA MESA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MORNING

8

MORNING RECEPTION IN PROGRESS. THE TERRACE AND YARD ARE BUBBLING WITH ENERGETIC KINDERGARTENERS AND THEIR PROUD PARENTS. A bright sandstone building, manicured landscaping, a VIEW OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN: public school meets a bit of paradise.

JANE
(feeling overwhelmed
again)
Gosh. It's all just so...

MADELINE
Right? Some people actually book
it for wedding receptions.

JANE
Wow.

MADELINE
And it's public, so we can even be
smug about it. Like driving a Tesla.

As Gabrielle passes--

GABRIELLE
(bright)
Madeline, hello, hi.

MADELINE
Hi, Gabby.

As Madeline and Gabrielle chatter on, Jane looks around,
then, to the ocean--

FLASHBACK

9 EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

9

Jane, visibly shaken, a bit disheveled, walks on the
beach, arms folded tightly.

MADELINE (O.S.)
Jane?
(again)
Jane?

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED: 9

BACK TO PRESENT

10 EXT. SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS 10

MADELINE
You okay?

JANE
Fine.

MADELINE
Where'd you go just then?

JANE
What? Oh, I'm just...

MADELINE
Still getting over the whelm.

JANE
Where's Ziggy?

MADELINE
He's fine, Chloe's got him. Look,
there they are, playing already.

JANE
(heartfelt)
I am so grateful that he already
has a friend? He's been so scared,
you have no idea.

As RENATA, forty-eight, appears. Beautiful,
sophisticated, affluent, with a finely-tuned self-
awareness of all of it. A crisp, symmetrical haircut,
stylish glasses, Prada Pacific blue pantsuit; a woman
of power.

MADELINE
(warmly)
Renata, hello.

RENATA
(big smile)
Madeline!

So friendly, they can only hate each other.

MADELINE
(claiming dominion)
Please meet my friend, Jane Chapman,
she's new here.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

JANE
(to Renata)
Hello.

RENATA
(with emphasis)
Renata Klein. A pleasure, and
welcome.
(to Madeline)
How was your summer?

MADELINE
Flew by, whoosh, how 'bout yours?

RENATA
The same. I heard you're doing
some volunteer work at the theater,
how wonderful.

MADELINE
It's actually a paid position. Not
that it compares with venture
capitalizing, of course, but there
are rewards, being involved in the
arts.

RENATA
I'm sure there are.

CLOSE ON SAMANTHA

SAMANTHA
The stay-at-homes never really mixed
well with the career women.

CLOSE ON THEA

THEA
Everybody knows Madeline took that
theater job because she secretly
wanted to be in the musical. I've
heard her sing: chalk on a
blackboard.

RESUME

Madeline is still shepherding Jane through the thicket
of humanity.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: (2)

10

MADELINE

I need coffee, let's get to the
coffee, they serve Stumptown here,
by the way, straight out of Portland,
there's a rumor they lace it with a
little St. John's wart, too, happy
parents make for good fundraising,
oh, look, there's Celeste.

THEIR POV

Celeste is aiming her Smartphone, having the BOYS POSE
for a picture.

RESUME JANE AND MADELINE

as they forge through the THICKET OF PARENTS--

JANE

(softly; taken aback
at Celeste's beauty)

Wow.

MADELINE

Right? Beyond beautiful, it's
disgusting, what's worse is she's
maybe the nicest person you'll ever
meet.

(calling)

Celestee-dee.

CELESTE

Birthday girl!

As Celeste and Madeline embrace, we:

ANGLE RENATA

watching the same, and eyeing Celeste: Who is this
mother?

CLOSE ON THEA

THEA

Renata liked to play "Mirror Mirror
on the Wall." I think Celeste pretty
much ruined the game for her.

RESUME

CELESTE

(to Madeline)

You look fantastic.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: (3)

10

MADELINE

Well, of course I do, I'm forty.
Brand new dress, brand new shoes,
brand new friend, meet Jane Chapman,
we already love her.

CELESTE

(warmly)
Hi, Jane.

JANE

Hello.

MADELINE

(re: Jane)
She came to my rescue after I fell,
trying to save young lives. Look
at my ankle, figures, soon as I get
the new shoes, one foot would grow
out of them.

CELESTE

My God, it's really swollen.

Upon which, NATHAN CARLSON, forties, and his wife,
BONNIE, twenty-seven, arrive. Nathan wears his customary
light blue shirt: "Carlson Premium Landscaping"
embroidered over the left pocket. Bonnie is cheerful,
pretty, physically fit, a beautiful, sensitive soul...
makes Madeline ill.

NATHAN

Hey, Maddie.

MADELINE

(thrown)
What, are you kidding?

NATHAN

Excuse me?

MADELINE

(recovering)
Hey, Bonnie. Nathan, Bonnie, meet
Jane Chapman,
(to Jane)
Nathan is my ex-husband,
(to Bonnie)
that dress is so gorgeous, by the
way.

BONNIE

Thank you, I made it.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: (4)

10

MADELINE
Of course you did.

BONNIE
(to Madeline; eagerly)
Listen, I'd love to arrange a play-
date for Chloe and Skye.

MADELINE
(over my dead body;
but covering with
the brightest of
smiles)
Oooooohhh...

BONNIE
(so sweet)
They're not just classmates, but
basically half-sisters, y'know.

MADELINE
(upping the sweetness)
Are they, now? You want to share
the math on that?

ANGLE NATHAN

recognizing Madeline's undercurrent of hostility.

RESUME

BONNIE
Well, Skye is Abigail's half-sister,
and Abby is Chloe's half-sister,
so... y'know.

MADELINE
Ah.

CLOSE ON HARPER

HARPER
We were all concerned about Bonnie
and Madeline both having their girls
in Kindy together, and what that
would do to the classroom dynamic.

RESUME

Nathan pulls Madeline aside.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: (5)

10

NATHAN

Listen, are you okay to swap weekends? Let Abby come with us on Friday?

MADELINE

Why?

NATHAN

We're going to see Bonnie's mother in Camarillo and Abby hates missing out. She and Bonnie's mother have kind of a special connection.

Madeline feels a twinge of vomit burn on her esophagus.

MADELINE

Sure. No problem.

NIPPAL (O.S.)

Good morning.

REVEAL PRINCIPAL WARREN NIPPAL

fifty, tightly wound. A career administrator, humorless, charmless, but a master of organization. Derives enormous power from having the future of so many young lives in his hands. Many of them with rich parents.

NIPPAL (CONT'D)

My name, as many of you know, is Warren Nippal, I am the Principal of La Mesa Public Elementary.

A SMATTERING OF APPLAUSE, UNDER--

NIPPAL (CONT'D)

First, let me extend a heartfelt welcome to all of you.

He then gestures with open arms, a 'welcome' gesture.

CELESTE

(sotto; to Jane)

He can never quite synch up his words and gestures, it's kind of cute.

WE HEAR A COUPLE OF "SSSHH'S" FROM NEARBY PARENTS.

NIPPAL

In what promises to be an extraordinary...

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: (6)

10

He then lifts up his arms to emphasize "extraordinary."
Again, he's a half-beat behind with the gesture.

NIPPAL (CONT'D)
...year for your young children.
Here...

He's again late with the gesture, to indicate 'here.'

NIPPAL (CONT'D)
...at La Mesa, one of the finest
elementary institutions... not just
in the Golden State of California...

CELESTE
(sotto)
Wait for it.

NIPPAL
...but in the United States of
America.

CLOSE ON DETECTIVE QUINLAN

QUINLAN
We're looking at all angles. Nobody
has been ruled out.

CLOSE ON SAMANTHA

forty

SAMANTHA
So we're like seriously using the
word... "murder"?

11 EXT. FISHERMAN'S WHARF - DAY

11

Madeline, Jane, and Celeste walk barefoot in the sand
toward a small mis-shapen board-and-batten building at
the edge of the boardwalk. The beach is breathtaking,
though it's only Jane's breath being seized at the
moment; Madeline stockpiles oxygen for talking. Hobbled
a bit by the turned ankle, she walks in the middle,
arms locked with both Jane and Celeste. Already intimate
friends, it seems.

MADELINE
I didn't make a scene, did I?

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

CELESTE

(assuring)

I couldn't even tell you were angry.
It looked like a friendly
conversation between two people who
hate each other.

MADELINE

I do not hate him, it was just, I
didn't expect to see him there.

(to Jane)

He walked out on me when Abigail
was a baby. She's fifteen now.
There should be a law, ex-husbands
have to live in a different State.
He's a decent person, don't get me
wrong, and so's Bonnie. In fact,
she's so nice and pretty and perfect
and sweet and wonderful I could
just...

JANE

(guessing)

Punch her in the face?

That startles Madeline; she stops.

MADELINE

(to Celeste; re: Jane)

Okay. We love her.

12 INT. BLUE BLUES CAFE - DAY

12

Funky, charming, a bit distressed... a great little gem
of a salty beach cafe. TOM, thirties, proprietor-barista
extraordinaire, is there as the girls arrive. A FEW
OTHER CUSTOMERS.

MADELINE

Hey, Tom.

TOM

Madeline! What's happened to you?

MADELINE

I am gravely injured, Tom. And
it's my birthday.

TOM

(with a wink to Jane)

Oh, calamity.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

TOM (CONT'D)

(then)

Hey, Celeste.

MADELINE

This is our friend, Jane. She's my knight in shining armor. My knight-ess, rescued me like a wounded dog lying in the street, and you know what else, she's funny.

TOM

Nice to meet you, funny Jane.

JANE

You, too.

MADELINE

(to Tom)

Bring us your special coffee and throw in something chocolate that won't make my ass fat.

TOM

You got it.

CELESTE

(to Jane)

How long have you been in Monterey?

JANE

Two weeks, actually. We moved just in time for the school year.

MADELINE

And you're going to love it. Do you surf? What about your husband -- or partner, I should say, or boyfriend, girlfriend -- I'm open to all possibilities.

JANE

No husband or partner. Just me.

MADELINE

(gently pressing)

So... Ziggy's dad..?

JANE

He's not in the picture.

(then)

He was actually never in the picture, we weren't... together.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: (2)

12

MADELINE

You mean a one-night stand? Wow.

(then)

For some reason, that actually sounds quite lovely.

(then)

Was it fun?

CELESTE

(re: Madeline's
interrogation)

Oh my god.

MADELINE

What? Young people have fun, okay?

CELESTE

And we don't?

MADELINE

Well, we try, but we're victims of "real-life interruptus."

(to Jane; re: Celeste)

Not that Ms. Perfect here would have any concept of real life, did I tell you about the gorgeous husband, by the way, takes time out from making gobs of money only to either buy her presents, or shower her with affection. It's disgusting.

As Tom brings the coffee--

CELESTE

I'm not seeing anything celebratory there.

(to Tom)

Could you bring us three glasses of champagne, please.

TOM

Right away.

MADELINE

(with delight)

Oooh, in the morning, it feels so naughty, just spank my bottom,

(to Jane)

are you good with a little champagne?

JANE

(thrown)

What?

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: (3) 12

MADELINE
Champagne? Do you drink it?

FLASHBACK

13 INT. BAR - NIGHT 13

Jane is seated at a nondescript bar; A HANDSOME BUT
NONDESCRIPT MAN HAS JUST APPROACHED.

MAN
(to Jane)
Could I treat you to a glass of
champagne?

BACK TO PRESENT

14 INT. BLUE BLUES CAFE - DAY 14

JANE
Um... sure. Maybe a little.

CLOSE ON THEA

THEA
They were drunk when they came back
from their little champagne
breakfast.

CLOSE ON BONNIE

BONNIE
They were not drunk.

CLOSE ON GABRIELLE

GABRIELLE
Jane was always chewing gum, always.
Like she was trying to cover up her
breath. I notice things.

15 EXT. SCHOOL, TERRACE - MID-DAY 15

THE PARENTS HAVE ALL REGATHERED; THE KIDS ARE EMERGING;
WE FIRST FIND ZIGGY, CHARGING TOWARD JANE, STILL WITH
MADELINE.

ZIGGY
Mommy!

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

JANE
Hey, baby. How was it?

ZIGGY
Fun.

JANE
(deep relief; if not
euphoria)
Fun?

ZIGGY
I made friends.

JANE
(hugging him tightly)
That's so wonderful.

MADELINE
He's beyond adorable, you do know
that.
(then)
Where's the Chloe?
(then; spotting)
Ah, there, look at her, totally
networking.

RENATA
(arriving)
Jane. Renata, hello, we met earlier.

JANE
Hello.

With Renata is a YOUNG WOMAN, twenty.

RENATA
I wanted to introduce you to
Juliette, my Amabella's nanny.

JULIETTE
(French accent; bored)
Pleased to meet you.

JANE
You too.

RENATA
(re: Juliette)
She's French. I always think it's
nice for the nannies to get to know
each other. A little support group,
shall we say.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (2)

15

MADELINE

Jane's not a nanny, Renata, she's a mother, only young, like we used to be.

RENATA

Oh.

TWO FIVE-YEAR-OLD BLOND BOMBERS CHARGE BY, HEADING FOR CELESTE WHO BENDS DOWN TO GROUP-HUG THEM BOTH, as Bonnie arrives--

BONNIE

Madeline. Listen.

(pulls her aside)

I just found out you're working at the community theater, which is so great.

(then; delicately)

There's a petition going round, which I signed, but please know, when I did, I had no idea that you were involved with the production.

MADELINE

What do you mean, a petition?

BONNIE

About the play. There's some concern, which I share, about whether it's, y'know, appropriate.

MADELINE

"Avenue Q," it only won oodles of Tonys.

BONNIE

But this is Monterey. Our values here are...

MADELINE

Are what?

BONNIE

It's just that a musical which celebrates pornography and racism, and vulgarity...

MADELINE

(bristling)

You're telling me there's actually a petition to stop the production?

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (3)

15

CLOSE ON THEA

THEA
That play was kind of a life-line
to Madeline, if you want my personal
opinion. Is the floor open to
personal opinions?

CLOSE ON HARPER

HARPER
She grew up wanting to be Betty
Grable. Ended up Betty Crocker.

RESUME

BONNIE
I've been told the puppets swear.
And defame Gary Coleman.

MADELINE
(to Bonnie)
There's something called the First
Amendment in this country, are we
familiar with the First Amendment,
Bonnie?

BONNIE
(playing dumber than
she is)
Um. Would that be the one that
entitles me to my opinion?

AND THEN, A RISING WAVE OF COMMOTION: A SOBBING, CURLY-
HAired LITTLE GIRL, SHOULDERS HUNCHED, CLUTCHING HER
NECK.

RENATA
Amabella?

Renata rushes to the distraught curly-haired child.
Juliette follows, but hardly in a rush: EMILY BARNES,
twenty-four, known to all as Ms. Barnes, stands alongside
Amabella.

MS. BARNES
Excuse me. Could I have everybody's
attention for a moment, both children
and parents please.

MADELINE
(to Jane)
Uh oh, teacher voice.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (4)

15

MS. BARNES

(teacher voice)

We've had such a lovely morning,
but we need to have a little chat
about something. And it's a little
bit serious.

WE HEAR SOME MUTTERING, WHISPERS: "What's going on?"
etc.

MS. BARNES (CONT'D)

Someone just hurt Annabella. Excuse
me, Amabella. And I'd like whoever
it was to please come over and
apologize because we don't hurt our
friends at school, do we?

(doubling down on the

teacher voice)

And if we do, we always say sorry,
because that's what big kindergarten
children do.

SILENCE. SOME KIDS STARE BACK. SOME STARE AT THE
GROUND. SOME BURY THEIR FACES INTO THEIR MOTHERS'
SKIRTS. There are no apologists forthcoming. Finally--

RENATA

Who was it, Amabella? Who hurt
you, baby?

The child mutters something inaudible.

MS. BARNES

(steering the witness)

Was it an accident, maybe?

RENATA

It wasn't an accident, for God's
sake, look at her neck, it has marks.

Ms. Barnes kneels to talk to the little girl, whispers
in her ear. The room is frozen, rapt.

JANE

(to Ziggy)

Did you see what happened, honey?

Ziggy shakes his head no. With vigor.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (5)

15

MS. BARNES

Apparently one of the boys... um,
well... my problem is that the
children don't know one another's
names yet. Amabella... she can't
tell me which little boy...

RENATA

We're not going to let this go.

HARPER

(backing Renata)
Absolutely not.

MS. BARNES

I wonder if I could ask all the
children... well, actually, just
the boys, to come over here for
just a moment.

Silence.

MS. BARNES (CONT'D)

Please.

And ONE BY ONE, TWO BY TWO, PARENTS BEGIN TO NUDGE THEIR
SONS FORWARD.

JANE

Go ahead, Ziggy.

ZIGGY

(taking her hand)
I'm ready to go home now, Mommy.

JANE

I's okay, honey. Just for a second.

Ziggy tentatively moves forward to join the ranks. THE
BOYS, ALL SHAPES AND SIZES, FORM A STRAGGLY LINE IN
FRONT OF MS. BARNES. MAX, ONE OF CELESTE'S TWINS, RUNS
A MATCHBOX CAR OVER THE HEAD OF HIS BROTHER, JOSH, WHO
SWATS IT AWAY LIKE A FLY.

MADELINE

It's like a police line-up.

ANOTHER SMALL CHORUS OF "SSSHHS" FROM NEARBY MOTHERS.

MS. BARNES

Amabella, honey, can you point to
the boy who hurt you?

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (6)

15

Amabella surveys the line-up, then points at the little gangster standing next to Ziggy.

MADELINE
(sotto; to Celeste)
I knew it. Adopted.

MS. BARNES
(re: the gangster)
This boy?

AMABELLA
No.
(re: Ziggy)
Him.

Jane's entire body clenches, as Ms. Barnes puts her hand on little Ziggy's head.

MS. BARNES
(to Amabella)
This boy?

ZIGGY BLINKS HARD, TWICE.

AMABELLA
Yes. He tried to choke me.

ZIGGY
It wasn't me!

AMABELLA
(with conviction)
Yes it was. You did it.

THE CAMERA ZOOMS TIGHT ON ZIGGY, TWO MORE HARD BLINKS;
THE CAMERA THEN WHIPS, ZOOMS IN ON JANE; she feels her chest tightening.

CLOSE ON THEA

THEA
There was something not quite right about that Ziggy. Something about his eyes.

CLOSE ON MATT

forties; blue-collar

MATT
They were spread kind of far apart.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (7) 15

CLOSE ON HARPER

HARPER

He wasn't just violent, but
perhaps... not the brightest bulb.
I mean, he picked the wrong little
girl to strangle.

16 EXT. SCHOOL, TERRACE - DAY 16

THE CROWD IS STILL FROZEN, Jane has gone white. Her
body is rigid.

JANE

(horrificed)
Ziggy would never...

MADELINE

(extending a comforting
hand)
They're children, they're not
civilized yet.

JANE

No.
(pushing through)
Excuse me, please.

She forges ahead toward--

CELESTE

Oh, dear. This is awful.

JANE

Ziggy?

ZIGGY

(firmly)
I didn't do anything.

MS. BARNES

Ziggy, sweetie, we just need you to
say "Sorry," to Amabella, that's
all.

JANE

(to Amabella)
Are you sure it was this boy?

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

RENATA
(nice, but firm; to
Ziggy)
Could you say sorry to Amabella,
please? You hurt her quite badly.

ZIGGY
It wasn't me.

ANGLE CELESTE WITH MADELINE

CELESTE
(sotto)
Could she have got it wrong?

MADELINE
(possible, but...)
Well. She's gifted.

RESUME

RENATA
(to Ziggy)
Please don't lie. All you need do
is say you're sorry.

JANE
(firmly)
Ziggy doesn't lie.

RENATA
(to Jane)
Well, I can assure you Amabella is
telling the truth.

HARPER
Absolutely.

The entire gathering is becoming tense.

JANE
If my son says he didn't do it, I
believe him.

MS. BARNES
(over her head)
Okay. We seem to have reached a
little stalemate here.

MADELINE
(trying to diffuse)
Renata, you know how children can
be.

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED: (2)

16

Renata's head jerks to glare at Madeline.

RENATA

The child needs to take
responsibility for his actions. He
needs to see there are consequences,
that he cannot go around choking
other children, that he can't pretend
he didn't do it, and as prolific as
you are at making everything about
you, this is not your business.

MAX

(thrilled; to his
twin)
The grownups are fighting.

CELESTE

(to Max)
Ssshhh.

AMABELLA

(to Renata)
It doesn't matter, Mommy.

RENATA

It does matter,
(to Jane)
please make your son apologize.

MADELINE

Renata--

RENATA

Madeline--

HARPER

(backing Renata; to
Madeline)
Stay out of it.

RENATA

(to Jane)
He needs to say he's sorry.

JANE

(digging in)
I can't make him apologize for
something he didn't do.

RENATA

Your child is lying.

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED: (3)

16

JANE
I don't think he is.

MS. BARNES
(way over her head)
Alright--

AMABELLA
I want to go home now.

ZIGGY
Me too.

RENATA
This is completely unacceptable.

MS. BARNES
Alright--

RENATA
(to Ziggy)
If you ever touch my little girl
again like that, you will be in big
trouble.

JANE
Hey!!

MADELINE
(to Renata)
Now you need to apologize.

Renata glares.

CLOSE ON JACKIE

JACKIE
The battle lines were drawn right
there. Team Renata. Versus Team
Madeline.
(admitting)
It was wonderful.

17 EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - LATER

17

Madeline, Jane, and Celeste on a brisk walk; Madeline's
ankle has been healed by adrenaline; KIDS IN TOW, they
speak in hushed but urgent tones.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

MADELINE

Aren't there laws in effect now,
like a Students' Bill of Rights, I
read it, even kindergarteners are
entitled to due process.

CELESTE

He's not being disciplined.

MADELINE

But he could be stigmatized as a
bully, which is worse. Can't we
file some kind of injunction-thing
to nip Renata in her Draconian bud?

JANE

I don't really want to make a big
deal of this.

MADELINE

I'm just saying, as a pre-emptive
strike, it might be wise to let
Renata know she should be careful,
that's all. Celeste used to be a
lawyer, and a good one.

CELESTE

And my legal advice here would be
to just let this blow over.

CLOSE ON THEA

THEA

Things never blow over once Madeline
gets involved. They blow up.

(then)

Boom! Sorry.

CLOSE ON DR. PAUL CHANG

fifties; some sort of press conference.

DR. CHANG

There was a four-by-three stallate,
full thickness, scalp laceration,
located on the superior occipital
scalp. We also found full thickness
scalp contusion and associated gall
and subgleal hemorrhages. Putrified
and liquified brain.

18 INT. MACKENZIE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

18

ED, forties, IS CARRYING A LIT BIRTHDAY CAKE TO MADELINE, seated, AS HE, CHLOE, and ABIGAIL, fifteen, ALL SING, while FRED, age seven, accompanies on trumpet.

ED/ABIGAIL/CHLOE

(singing)

Happy birthday to you/ Happy
birthday, dear Mommy/ Happy birthday
to you.

MADELINE

Thank you, thank you, thank you,
and my wish has already come true,
which is to be with family.

FRED BLOWS INTO HIS TRUMPET; LETTING SOME SALIVA SPRITZ
OUT OF THE SPIT VALVE.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

And there goes the moment, thank
you, Fred,

(re: the cake)

I see the cake's already pre-cut,
interesting.

ED

Well, we always do the "oh-it's-too-
pretty-to-carve-and-destroy" dance,
so I made an executive decision.

And FRED BLOWS OUT THE CANDLE.

ED (CONT'D)

(to Fred)

That shoulda been Mom's job, big
guy.

FRED

I didn't want wax on the frosting.
Anyway, she already got her wish.

MADELINE

Yes, I most certainly did.

(doling out slices)

Here's yours, buddy.

(plating another slice)

Abigail.

ABIGAIL

Oh, that's okay.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

MADELINE

You're not going to have cake?

ABIGAIL

I'm trying to watch my microbiome.

MADELINE

I'm sorry, your what?

ABIGAIL

Microbiome. All diseases basically come from the gut. Carbohydrates and sugar are the two most toxic inflammatories, especially neurologically?

MADELINE

We can't cut your microbiome a little slack on my birthday?

ABIGAIL

The reason Joan of Arc said "let them eat cake" is because she knew it would kill them.

MADELINE

I think you mean Marie Antoinette, who didn't say it either.

(then)

How 'bout just a sliver?

ABIGAIL

It's also got butter. And I'm vegan.

MADELINE

(annoyed)

Again?

ED

Alright.

MADELINE

What, "alright," the brain needs fat, too,

(to Abigail)

have you heard of B-12?

FRED

That's a fighter jet.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (2)

18

ABIGAIL

I can get just as much protein and
B-12 from spinach as you can from
one of your In-'N-Out double-doubles.

MADELINE

Okay, y'know what? Don't think I
don't know where this microbiome
thing is coming from.

Uh oh.

ABIGAIL

Little help, Ed?

MADELINE

Bonnie doesn't always make the best
nutritional choices, some of those
health bars she eats are loaded
with fructose.

ABIGAIL

Why are you always so mean to Bonnie?

As Madeline slams the table--

MADELINE

I am not mean, dammit.

ED

(settle)

Honey.

MADELINE

(to Abigail)

By the way, you know what your
favorite person on earth did today?
She actually signed a petition trying
to stop our production of a Tony-
Award-winning, critically-acclaimed
piece of art.

ABIGAIL

This is the play where puppets drop
F-Bombs?

And Ed drops his head in his hands. The train has left
the depot.

FRED

Cool!

MADELINE

It is not only not
about that--

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (3)

18

MADELINE (CONT'D)
--but it's important for you to see,
it captures the struggle of young
adults being disillusioned with
life, feeling demoralized and
defrauded by the false promises of
tomorrow.

ABIGAIL
I can get all that here.

And Madeline whacks the table.

ED
(singing to diffuse)
How old are you now?

And Madeline heads off and out the kitchen door. A
beat.

ABIGAIL
What did I say?

19 EXT. WRIGHT HOUSE, POOL - EVENING

19

Celeste and the boys are in the shallow pool, she's got
her phone, making them pose for photos.

CELESTE
Okay. Both arms reaching out, free-
style, like you're swimming.

MAX
But we're not swimming.

CELESTE
But it will seem like you are in
the picture, c'mon, I want it to
look completely synchronized.

As they reach--

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Perfect, except for the faces, can
we maybe smile a little?

JOSH
Dad!!

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

CELESTE

Exactly, so Dad can see it, now put
the arms up like you're doing the
backstroke.

And now WE SEE WHAT JOSH SEES: PERRY, in a bathing suit,
is sneaking up behind Celeste; he's holding a finger up
to his lips: "Ssshhh."

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Oh, wow, these are the best smiles
ever, but look right at me.

As Perry gently lowers himself into the pool behind
Celeste, he picks up a fin.

JOSH

Hey, Mom. Wanna play "Angry Beaver"?

MAX

Yeah!

CELESTE

In a minute. Okay, puff up your
cheeks and chests like you're holding
your breath.

JOSH

I think the angry beaver is gonna
get you, Mom.

CELESTE

(clicking away)

Oh, my, I hope not, that'd be so
awful.

And suddenly, PERRY ROARS, AS HE "THWAPS" THE WATER
WITH THE FIN. CELESTE LETS OUT A SCREAM OF HORROR; AS
THE BOYS SQUEAL WITH DELIGHT, she turns to SEE PERRY.
She's stunned.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Perry?

PERRY

(a warm smile)

Okay, so I'm a happy beaver.

CELESTE

What...?

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED: (2)

19

PERRY

I just couldn't miss their first
day of school.

CELESTE

So you're not going to Vienna?

PERRY

No, I still have to go. But I can
get a flight out of San Francisco
tomorrow.

CELESTE

(beyond surprised)

You flew all the way back from New
York...

PERRY

Hey. Tomorrow's their first day.

Celeste, moved, grateful, goes to him, hugs him tightly,
heartfelt. And they kiss.

JOSH

Eeew. Yuck.

MAX

Gross.

PERRY

(pointing the imaginary
pistol)

Bang bang.

The boys play dead in the water, as Perry and Celeste
kiss, lovingly, passionately.

CLOSE ON GABRIELLE

GABRIELLE

Everyone thinks that Celeste and
Perry are so perfect lovey-dovey.
I walked by them, sitting in their
car, parked on the side of the road
on Trivia night. They looked angry.
Beyond gorgeous, but angry.

20 EXT. CARMEL - SUNSET

20

A STUNNING RON MANN-CONTEMPORARY, OVERLOOKING THE OCEAN;
WE FIND RENATA ON THE DECK, sipping a Tanqueray and
tonic. Staring, glaring into the horizon. HUSBAND
PETER KLEIN, fifty, EMERGES, sits, glass of wine in
hand. Silence. Until--

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

RENATA

What are the kids doing?

PETER

Denise is with the SAT tutor.
Amabella is on-line, I think
gambling.

No response. She's been quiet all evening. Dangerous
territory for Peter. He's doomed either for inquiring,
or failing to. Finally--

PETER (CONT'D)

Everything okay?

RENATA

Fine.

"Fine" means "beyond fucked" in Renata-speak. But he's
on record for asking at least, maybe he can tip-toe out
of the minefield. More silence. Until--

RENATA (CONT'D)

(simply)

I'm not liked.

PETER

What?

She fixes a look on him.

RENATA

I said I'm not liked.

PETER

(a weak attempt)

That simply isn't true, honey.

Renata holds a look: "You know it's true." And then
she looks back to the ocean.

RENATA

It's one thing to be demonized for
having the temerity to have a career.

She sips.

RENATA (CONT'D)

I mean, what kind of person would
choose to work? Certainly not a
"mother" by any acceptable
definition.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED: (2)

20

RENATA (CONT'D)

(sips)

If you could have seen the looks I
got today. The morning I decide
not to go to the office but rather
to accompany my child to her
Kindergarten Orientation... to defend
her after she is physically
assaulted, to react humanly, as any
mother would... I was met with utter
contempt.

Okay. He has a job to do here. Certainly if he's hoping
for sex this calendar year.

PETER

(carefully)

I doubt very much they were looking
at you with contempt.

(then)

I'm sure there are those, especially
women, who might resent you. You're
beautiful, hugely successful,
financially independent, on the
School Committee, the Board at the
aquarium...

(nudging it even
further)

...and to make matters worse, you're
beyond sexy.

She stares. Straight ahead. He should leave it there.
They never do.

PETER (CONT'D)

It's the irony of women, isn't it?
The goal is to garner the envy of
your friends, but god forbid you
collect too much of it.

Her head slowly turns; levying a punishing look on him.
He fucked up. Knows it.

21 EXT. MACKENZIE BACKYARD - EVENING

21

Madeline is pacing about, still stewing, as Ed emerges
from the house, approaches. A look between them, and...

ED

You want to talk about it?

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

21

MADELINE

Do not try to handle me, I am too
old to be handled, I am forty.

Ed knows to wait it out; her default mode is "vent."
He goes to the picnic table. Sits. She paces about,
and then, finally--

MADELINE (CONT'D)

I'm losing her. Abigail.

ED

Of course you're not losing her.

MADELINE

All she talks about is Bonnie.
Bonnie this, Bonnie that. Today
it's her microbiome. Last week,
they went to some homeless shelter
together, she came home all excited
about peeling potatoes, said it was
such a beautiful experience to be
able to contribute. She'll whine
if I ask her to set the table, but
peel one fucking potato with
Bonnie...

(off Ed; softening)

I miss her. I can feel her pulling
away.

(then)

And Chloe will be right behind her,
you should have seen her march right
into school this morning like a
woman/child, never looking back:
"I'm on my own now, Mom. See ya."

(a beat)

They'll all be grown and gone one
day and then we'll be left to move
on to other chapters in life and I
don't have any other chapters.
This is it. I'm a mother. That's
my entire universe which is in total
melt-down at the moment because my
oldest daughter prefers to hang
with her fucking step-thing.

ED

(softly)

Hey. You will never lose them.
And you know that.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED: (2)

21

MADELINE

(fighting against her
emotion)

I um... I always thought that
Nathan's punishment for walking out
would be that Abby wouldn't love
him as much as me. I figured he'd
pay the price, y'know? But he
hasn't. He's got Bonnie, who's
nicer and younger and prettier and
and probably gives mint-flavored
organic blow-jobs. And he's got
Abigail, too. He got away with it
all. He won.

Ed absorbs that.

ED

(voice of calm)

Okay. Speaking as the consolation
prize, we're going to have a pretty
big fight about what you just said.
But not tonight, on your birthday.

MADELINE

I didn't mean... you are the best
thing that ever happened to me,
don't you think for one second that
you're not.

(a beat)

It's possible for me to love you
with all my heart, and
nevertheless...

ED

Hurt.

He gets her. God, is she grateful for that. He pulls
her into a deep embrace. Love is love.

22 EXT. TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

22

A small, unloved building, some decay on the shingles.
But nothing looks too shabby when bathed in a full
Monterey moon.

DI (O.S.)

Oh my God. Is he okay?

23 INT. TOWNHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

23

Jane walks through the house; she's on her cell, speaking with DI, her mother. SHE CONTINUES TO WALK AROUND THE HOUSE THROUGHOUT, almost as if she's trying to get comfortable with the place; like she belongs.

JANE

He was a little shaken up at first,
said he never wanted to go back to
school. But he's okay now.

(as she peeks into

Ziggy's room)

Sleeping soundly, so that's good.

DI (O.S.)

Why would she accuse Ziggy?

JANE

I don't know. She could have been
confused, there were a lot of new
faces... the thing is, she seemed
truthful, it wasn't like she was a
brat. The mother was a little awful,
but the girl seemed okay.

DI (O.S.)

Well, you can't possibly think Ziggy
tried to choke her.

JANE

Of course not.

DI (O.S.)

So what's going to happen?

JANE

Well, the principal decided it's
best to let it go, move forward, so
that's what we're going to do.

DI (O.S.)

I still don't understand why you
chose to move there.

JANE

Can we not get into that again,
I've told you, I wanted a fresh
start. Plus, the public school
here is like a private school, it's
the best thing for Ziggy.

As Jane continues to walk the house--

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

23

DI (O.S.)
I'm just worried about you being
there all alone, that's all.

JANE
(convincing herself)
I'm not. I've already made friends,
Mom. Most of the people are really
friendly.

DI (O.S.)
I know a little about these snooty
peninsula towns, honey. They'll
see you as the white trash who moved
there to take advantage of their
juji school system, you'll get all
the respect first-class passengers
hold out for the upgrades from coach.

JANE
Mom. You're way too jaded and too
cynical. People are fundamentally
good. And generous, and caring,
but it can't happen if you refuse
to allow for it.

DI (O.S.)
People need family in their lives,
too. You have none there.

JANE
(needing an exit)
Let's talk tomorrow. I'm gonna go
check on Zig.

Jane clicks off, walks back to Ziggy's bedroom.

24 INT. ZIGGY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

24

ZIGGY LIES THERE ASLEEP as Jane enters, approaches the
bed. Stares at him, as she often does when he's asleep.
All sleeping children are beautiful, but there's a
certain magic to Ziggy while he sleeps. All his
innocence comes to the fore. It hurts to think that
this tender, sensitive boy will one day grow into a
whiskered, broad-chested man thing. Jane stares, gently
climbs onto the bed, lies next to him. Studies that
little face, counting the freckles. And she can't help
but wonder a bit. Could he have done it? Does anybody
truly know their child? After all... she then shakes
the idea out of her head: "don't think about that."

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

Almost on cue, Ziggy's eyes open and he's staring at her. Into her.

JANE

(softly)

Hey. Did I wake you?

He says nothing. Jane stares.

JANE (CONT'D)

Zig.

ZIGGY

Am I in trouble?

JANE

No, baby.

But she has to ask. She has to.

JANE (CONT'D)

(delicately)

Ziggy. Did you touch that little girl? You can tell me.

He just stares.

JANE (CONT'D)

Did you, honey?

ZIGGY

No.

She studies his face. He just stares back. Then--

ZIGGY (CONT'D)

Why did she say I did it?

JANE

I don't know, baby. Maybe she just got it wrong.

A beat.

ZIGGY

Am I going to have any friends?

JANE

Of course you are, baby. It's all going to be great, I promise you.

A beat. His little eyes close again. She then pulls him tight to her.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: (2)

24

Holds him close, as if trying to corral his youth. If only he could stay small, insulated from the pains and hardship that tomorrow promises. As she cradles him tightly, some tears trickle; a myriad of emotions: joy, fear, love, worry... whatever the cocktail, it results in tears.

PERRY (O.S.)

One fish/ Two fish/ Red fish/ blue fish.

25 INT. WRIGHT HOUSE, TWINS' ROOM - NIGHT

25

Perry lies on one of the twin beds, the boys draped over him as he reads the Dr. Seuss classic. Celeste appears at the doorway and watches. Her man. Her boys.

PERRY

(reading)

Black fish/ Blue fish/ Old fish/
New fish/ This one has a little
star/ This one has a little car/
Say, what a lot of fish there are.

MAX

Let's go fishing for them.

PERRY

Oh, we won't fish for these fish.
These guys are special. In Alaska,
we'll be going for salmon.

JOSH

Yeah.

PERRY

(reading)

Some are red/ And some are blue/
Some are old and some are new.

AS PERRY CONTINUES, CELESTE TAKES A COUPLE OF PICTURES WITH HER SMARTPHONE.

CLOSE ON A COMPUTER

WE SEE THE SAME PICS.

PUSH BACK TO REVEAL

26 INT. WRIGHT HOUSE, DEN - CONTINUOUS

26

CELESTE AT HER COMPUTER, editing her Facebook page. It's a collage of bliss; Celeste organizes and re-organizes the page; there's a certain art to story-telling. She works away as Perry enters.

PERRY

The boys mentioned a little girl
getting hurt today.

CELESTE

(distracted; more
focused on the
Facebook)

Oh. I don't think she was really
injured, but... Renata Klein's
daughter... did you tell me you
once did a deal with her?

PERRY

Frilly, silly, carefree?

CELESTE

(with a smile)

Ha. That's her, alright.

PERRY

So what exactly happened?

CELESTE

(now looking at him)

Well, according to Amabella... that's
the daughter, a boy tried to choke
her.

PERRY

Are you serious?

CELESTE

Seems nobody witnessed it, but she
was pretty distraught. And there
was a mark on her neck.

PERRY

Which boy, do you know?

CELESTE

His name is Ziggy, he's new. And
truth be told, he seems very sweet.
I met his mother, who couldn't be
nicer.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED:

26

PERRY

Well, to be safe, let's tell Josh
and Max to keep their distance from
this kid.

CELESTE

(don't be silly)
Oh, come on.

PERRY

What do you mean, 'oh, come on'?
If the kid is violent--

CELESTE

He's not violent.

PERRY

You know this, how? Because you
met him for two minutes and saw he
had a sweet face?

CELESTE

First off, he may be completely
innocent, and--

PERRY

Or guilty, which is why, to be
safe,...

CELESTE

Perry.

PERRY

The last thing we need is for the
boys to be getting mixed up with
the wrong crowd.

CELESTE

They're five.

As she goes to pass him--

CELESTE (CONT'D)

And you're being ridiculous.

And he grabs her arm, hard.

PERRY

Hey.

CELESTE

Ow! That hurt.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED: (2)

26

PERRY
(suddenly icy)
The boys are to stay away from that
kid, do you hear me?

CELESTE
(also icy)
Take your hand off me.

PERRY
If I can't be here to look out for
them all the time, I'll at least
make sure that you do.

CELESTE
(icy; intense)
I asked you. To remove. Your
fucking hand.

This is scary now. Could it actually get violent? A
beat. Finally, he releases. She holds a dagger-glare,
then exits the room. OVER PERRY, WE HEAR THE TINKLING
OF SOME PIANO MUSIC. FOLLOWED BY:

MADELINE (O.S.)
(singing softly)
What do you do with a B.A. in
English?/ What is my life gonna
be?

27 INT. MACKENZIE HOUSE, FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

27

MADELINE SITS AT THE PIANO, PLAYING IMPERFECTLY, SINGING
SOFTLY... as if she's singing to herself and only
herself.

MADELINE
(singing)
Four years of college/ And plenty
of knowledge...

AS SHE HITS A WRONG NOTE, SHE STOPS PLAYING.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Shit.
(to herself)
Okay, let's try this again.

ANOTHER FALSE START ON THE PIANO; AND THEN SHE GETS IT
BACK INTO GEAR; as Abigail arrives at the door.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

27

MADELINE (CONT'D)

(singing)

But somehow I can't shake/ The
feeling I might make/ A difference
in the...

Suddenly, she sees Abigail.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Hey. Hi.
(re: the song)
Ha. I know.

ABIGAIL

That's a song from your puppet show,
right?

MADELINE

It's really more than a puppet show.

A beat.

ABIGAIL

Sorry I ruined your birthday.

MADELINE

You didn't ruin it, don't be silly.
It's just... people should eat cake
in life, that's what I always say.

(admitting)

Okay, that's maybe the first time
I've said it, but I stand by it.

Abigail goes, sits next to her mother. A beat as they
hold a look, Madeline suddenly gets ambushed -- and
this is not the first time -- that this little girl is
growing up -- fast -- and it wobbles her some.

ABIGAIL

This play is important to you, isn't
it?

(then)

I'll tell Bonnie not to sign the
petition.

MADELINE

She already did, but... we'll be
fine. The show must go on.

An awkward beat. Another beat. Madeline brushes a
piece of hair off Abigail's face; it's a gentle and
loving gesture. Then--

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED: (2)

27

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Do I smother you too much?

ABIGAIL

Do you 'smother' me too much?

MADELINE

I read a book, several actually,
(admitting)
okay, ten -- they all say with
teenage girls, there's a fine line
between loving them too much, loving
them too little. A line which I
seem to lose sight of.

ABIGAIL

I'd say you love me just the right
amount.

MADELINE

(fighting emotion)
Really?

ABIGAIL

Mom, are you okay? You're not like
dying or anything, are you?

MADELINE

Dying, of course not. Why would
you say such a thing?

ABIGAIL

Well, you seem a little wobbly.
Are you having one of your massive
periods?

MADELINE

No, I just...
(a beat)
What people don't tell you is that
you lose your children as they grow.
As beautiful and wonderful as you've
become, that little girl whose curly
hair I'd have to de-tangle... the
one who -- every time she had a bad
dream -- would crawl into my bed,
she's gone. I think that's what's
going on now with me a little, maybe
compounded by Chloe going into
kindergarten... I'm losing my babies.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED: (3)

27

MADELINE (CONT'D)
(deflecting)
Which, by the way, has been
clinically compared to a massive
period.

ABIGAIL
I'll always be your baby.

And that almost undoes Madeline. She fights mightily,
perhaps futilely to hold in her emotion. She dare not
say anything, fearing tears could actually gush out of
her mouth. She nods instead.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
Bonnie's like a friend. Maybe even
a best friend sometimes. But you're
my mother. I'm your daughter.

The tears flow now. Madeline goes to hug Abigail.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
(watch the shirt)
Silk.

And Madeline pulls back. No tears on silk.

MADELINE
I can still call you 'baby-cakes,'
right?

ABIGAIL
Forever.
(then)
Not in public.

Madeline smiles.

MADELINE
I better do my exercises, my piano
instructor is threatening to drop
me.

ABIGAIL
'Kay. Happy birthday.

MADELINE
Thank you.

Abigail heads off. MADELINE BEGINS TO SOFTLY PLAY;
IT'S AN INTERMEDIATE BUT PLEASANT SONG; A SIMPLE MELODY.

THE MUSIC CONTINUES, as we:

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED: (4)

27

CLOSE ON DETECTIVE QUINLAN

QUINLAN

We are treating the matter as a homicide. We have no suspects as of yet. I will say that we do believe we have probably already spoken to the person or persons involved.

DISSOLVE TO:

As THE PIANO MUSIC CONTINUES, WE AERIAL PAN MONTEREY: A BEAUTIFUL MOONLIT NIGHT.

DISSOLVE TO:

28 INT. TOWNHOUSE, JANE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

28

Jane lays on her back, eyes wide open, the promise of tomorrow now fully integrated with anxiety... OFF HER, we:

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE ON MADELINE

Her eyes too are open, as we pull back to REVEAL HER IN BED, being spooned by a sleeping Ed. THE MUSIC CONTINUES as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE ON RENATA

steely-eyed... WE PULL BACK TO REVEAL HER, sitting in her darkened but impeccably decorated living room... she sits somewhat rigidly, a nightcap in her hand. Alone. Alone. THE PIANO MUSIC CONTINUES as we:

CLOSE ON CELESTE

eyes open. PULL BACK TO REVEAL HER IN BED WITH PERRY, both on their sides, facing opposite directions. Sleep came to him. Not so much for her. She knows she will leave him. But when? OFF her, we:

FADE TO BLACK.