

BEING SILVER

by

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FADE IN:

OPENING CREDITS over home movie scenes showing images of the SILVER FAMILY in the late 1980's.

A shy, attractive PHYLLIS SILVER(39) carrying baby VICTORIA, points to the camera and waves. Baby Victoria starts to cry.

Young FRANCIE(11), in a birthday "cone" hat, blows out her birthday candles. She elbows aside her angry brother, SAMMY(10). He pushes her. She hits him.

Dashing ARNIE SILVER(49) fixes the crawl sprinkler. He flexes his muscle for the camera. Young Francie runs into frame and hangs off her father's flexed arm.

Two younger siblings, ROBBIE(8) and CHER(4), hold hands and run through the sprinkler. He's naked. She's dressed as Peter Pan.

Sammy and Francie run through the sprinkler. Phyllis, babe in arms, tries to control the wild scene. Pandemonium. She shoots a frustrated, overwhelmed look to the camera and hisses something we can only imagine.

A family pyramid is in the making. Arnie, flanked on either side by Francie and Sammy, re-plants Sammy's hands properly and waves Robbie up. Robbie tenuously picks his way onto their backs and finally Cher clambers up next to him.

For a moment the family is suspended in time. Robbie slips and the human pyramid laughingly falls apart. But Arnie is not laughing. He angrily waves at the camera to cut...

END OF HOME MOVIES

FADE UP:

EXT. LAWN - MORNING - PRESENT

A similar pyramid is in the works with A FATHER and FIVE CHILDREN of various ages. A Golden Retriever runs into frame barking. The triad tumbles down and they all laugh.

An impatient VOICE from somewhere calls out:

 CHER(O.S.)
CUT! And reset!

We realize we actually are...

EXT. COMMERCIAL SET, BURBANK, CA - NOON

We see boom mikes, cameras, lights and CREW, all for the filming of a dog food commercial.

CHER SILVER(35) walks toward the actors. She wears an X-Men T-shirt and her frazzled brown hair falls out of its tie back. She appears to be hanging on for dear life while standing still.

CHER
OK, remember the part where I said the family's happy? This looks like a funeral! I need happy!

The "family" members look at each other, puzzled.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
(whispers to a CREW MEMBER)
I was happy once. About two hours ago.

CHER
Let's do it over and this time-

Cher's cell phone rings in a little tune that sounds suspiciously like "Forget Your Troubles Come On Get..."

CHER
(answers the phone)
What!

PHYLLIS (O.S.)
Yoo-hoo.

CHER
Mother.

Everyone groans and we hear someone call out: "Take ten...again!"

JUST OFF THE SET - MOMENTS LATER Cher weaves her way through cables and trucks.

CHER
I gave you this number for *emergencies*.

INT. SILVER HOUSE, KITCHEN - BLOOMFIELD HILLS, MICHIGAN - 3PM

PHYLLIS SILVER(now 71) is a well preserved beauty. She fixes sandwiches as she talks. On the wall is a framed PHOTO of the SILVER FAMILY all grown up.

PHYLLIS

I just want you to know I'm giving all
your comics to Good Will.

INTERCUT - SILVER KITCHEN/COMMERCIAL SET

Cher trips on a cable.

CHER

What?!

PHYLLIS

You're too old for all that-

CHER

I'm not old!

Phyllis plates the sandwiches and sets the table for two.

PHYLLIS

So come home and claim them. You know
your sister's giving birth any minute.

CHER

So you're holding my comics hostage?

PHYLLIS

Family is a verb not a noun, dear.

CHER

(sighs)

How is Victoria?

PHYLLIS

The doctor has her on complete bed rest or
he's afraid she'll go into early labor.

(calls out)

Arnie!

(to Cher)

So she's running your father's business
from the bed. That girl.

ARNIE SILVER(now 81)shuffles in and stands behind Phyllis,
grinning. White hair and added pounds, but he still has the
good looks of an aging, if befuddled Clark Gable. Phyllis
turns to call him again.

PHYLLIS

Arnie- Jesus! Don't sneak up on me.

(to Cher)

Here, Dad wants to say hello.

An O.S. WORKER YELLS. Cher turns to see a truck in reverse
almost upon her. She leaps aside.

Arnie takes the phone as he and Phyllis sit down to lunch.

ARNIE
So are you working? I saw that American
Express commercial.

CHER
I didn't direct that one but I just did-

ARNIE
-Now that's a funny commercial.

CHER
(sighs)
Yeah, Dad, I know. It's not-

ARNIE
Did you see the American Express
commercial?

Phyllis takes the phone from Arnie and tucks his napkin
into his shirt like a bib.

PHYLLIS
Arnie. Eat.

He pulls the napkin out. She tucks it back. He pulls it
out.

ARNIE
I don't want it!

CHER
Uhhh... Mom?

Cher ducks as a WORKER swings a two-by-four.

CHER
Hey!

WORKER
Sorry, Ma'am.

CHER
Ma'am?
(under her breath)
Asshole.

PHYLLIS
This is how you talk at work?

Cher reaches the port-o-john and goes in.

INT. PORT-O-JOHN - DAY

Cher covers the mouthpiece to mute the spatter sound of pee.

CHER
Dad seems a little confused.

INTERCUT - PORT-O-JOHN/SILVER HOUSE KITCHEN

PHYLLIS
What? I can't hear you! Are you in the kitchen? I hear water.

She tries to tuck Arnie's napkin again.

PHYLLIS
Arnie, you want to have spots all over your front?

ARNIE
Leave it alone!

PHYLLIS
Fine! You'll look like a mess.

ARNIE
Fine.

PHYLLIS
Fine.

CHER
Mom, I gotta go.

PHYLLIS
Alright, dear. Think about coming home. For Chanukah maybe. God forbid you make a commitment but-

The phone SLIPS from Cher's shoulder. She makes a frantic grab, bobbles it... and it plunges down the johnny-hole with a dull SLAP. Phyllis's voice cuts through the shit.

PHYLLIS (O.S.)
I love you, Cher.

CHER
(leans over the hole)
Love you too.

INT. SILVER HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Phyllis hangs up and watches Arnie try to butter his bread. She takes it from him and butters it. Arnie brushes the front of his shirt with butter on his hand.

PHYLLIS

Jesus, Arnie! Look what you did!

She rubs at the stain with her napkin. He watches like a child.

INT. GAY BAR, WEST HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

Cher sits on a bar stool in the old-school lesbian bar surrounded by her FRIENDS. The jukebox blares '70's DISCO as they do shots and slam the empties down.

CHER

You tell me why it wouldn't work!

MUGSY

In legalese or just plain English?

The nay-sayer is MUGSY KLEIN(35), a fast-talking funny woman who could almost make you like lawyers. She holds an unlit cigarette and a mini pig-in-a-blanket balanced in the same hand. WENDY(36) and a very pregnant LISA(37) are next to her.

CHER

The elevator's falling down the shaft...

SYBIL

Dropping like a rock. Are we on this again?

SYBIL(34), auburn hair, graceful, hugs Cher's neck from behind. Cher unwraps Sybil's hands from around her.

CHER

Sybil Bernstein, you're strangling me.

WENDY

Does she always call you by both names?

SYBIL

Cuts down on the confusion.

(sarcastic)

All those Sybils out there.

CHER

Excuse me? The elevator theory. So just before the point of impact you kinda hop into the air. Thereby avoiding impact.

LISA

Wait. If you're *inside* the elevator, how do you know when the point of impact is?

WENDY

Besides the obvious physics issue here.

CHER

Maybe you just keep jumping up and down. That way you have a fifty-fifty chance of being in mid-air when it hits.

Beat. Cher's friends burst out laughing.

CHER

Ok, you are NOT my friends.

Sybil kisses Cher on the lips.

SYBIL

I'm *definitely* not your friend. But you keep jumping up and down as much as you want.

Cher blushes as Mugsy slides over a flat wrapped package.

CHER

Hey, we said no gifts.

MUGSY

This is for *Sybil*, to explain why we say "to know Cher..."

MUGSY, WENDY, LISA

...is to love her anyway."

Sybil tears open the gift.

CLOSE ON A BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO - Six year-old Cher, in her feet pajamas, struggles to move a small baby bookcase.

SYBIL (O.S.)

Wow. This explains a lot. Half the time I want to nail the furniture to the floor in her apartment.

MUGSY (O.S.)

Cher's a big re-arranger from way back.

CHER (O.S.)

Talk about deck chairs on the Titanic.

Cher signals the BARTENDER for another round.

CHER

My mother had this weird expression she'd do. A vacant smile plastered on her face like, "I'm so happy." She was depressed my whole childhood.

SYBIL

My mother was depressed too.

WENDY

Mine was too.

LISA

Yeah, mine too.

MUGSY

Come on, you guys. Not every mother was depressed. Mine spent every morning at synagogue, and then she-

(realizes)

Oh. Well, that's fucked up. Thanks.

They sit for a moment realizing the truth about motherhood.

LISA

Show us the smile.

Cher gets a vacant look in her eyes and tilts her head to the side like the Mona Lisa. The women scream with laughter.

SYBIL

I never want to see that again!

Wendy raises her glass.

WENDY

To Cher and Sybil. On one year together.

LISA

Cher's longest and most perfect fit.

They all drink.

CHER

The last nail's not in the coffin yet.

SYBIL

This could be the nail, Babe.

Sybil gives Cher a small box.

CHER

Not a ring, I hope.

She opens the box and pulls out a necklace.

CLOSE ON NECKLACE - A fierce four-armed Indian goddess dances on a flaming dragon.

SYBIL

Her name was Kurukulla. The Tibetan goddess of war and fierce independence.

CHER

Well, I like that last part.

Sybil clasps the necklace around Cher's neck.

SYBIL

Don't let yourself feel too good.

CHER

I felt good when I was born. Then I got spanked.

WENDY

(looks closer at the charm)

This is great, Syb. Did you make it?

SYBIL

Yep. Slaving over a hot kiln.

CHER

Thanks, honey. For my ugly little charm.

SYBIL

You'll learn to love her and you'll think of me.

CHER

I think of you right now.

Cher kisses Sybil for real. They both melt. Mugsy stands up.

MUGSY

And in honor of your goddess love I'm going outside to smoke.

WENDY

Mugsy. If you saw what your lungs
looked like you'd never smoke again.

MUGSY

Wendy, if you saw what a uterus looked
like you'd never have sex again.

LISA

You know there is a clinical
explanation for Cher's elevator theory.

Mugsy sits back down quickly.

MUGSY

Oooh. I can't wait.

Cher's one leg dangles, crossed over the other, her foot
shaking like a paint mixer at a hardware store. She downs
her shot.

LISA

I see it all the time with my patients. It
represents an obsessive avoidance combined
with a fear of growing up and creating
adult emotional ties. In men it's called
the Peter Pan syndrome.

They all turn to Cher but she's gone.

ON THE DANCE FLOOR - Cher dances wildly, singing along with
"You Can Ring My Bell." She beckons suggestively to Sybil.

MUGSY

You don't know whether to love her or
raise her.

SYBIL

Tonight I pick: love her.

Sybil skips to the dance floor, joins Cher and the two
dance with wild abandon to the old '70's disco hit.

EXT. PARK - WEST HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT (LATER)

Cher and Sybil on the swing set, swing slowly next to each
other and look at the full moon illuminating their faces.
Sybil takes Cher's hand.

SYBIL

Here's a question for us-

CHER

So I was driving on the 405 today and I suddenly thought: what if a 747 had to make an emergency landing?

SYBIL

Do you love me?

CHER

Do you brake? Do you speed up?

Sybil hops off her swing in a huff and walks away. Cher leaps, stumbles, then follows Sybil.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Sybil strides, angry. Cher follows, nervous, chatty.

CHER

And it would depend on which direction the plane was coming from...

Sybil passes between two parked cars and into the street. Cher stops. She eyes the bumpers, dreading the possibility of crushed legs. She bounds quickly through. Whew.

CHER

That was a trick question, right?

Sybil says nothing, just keeps walking.

INT. CHER'S APT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dark room. We can barely make out Cher and Sybil in bed. Then, a SLAP against pajamas.

CHER (O.S.)

Ow!

SYBIL (O.S.)

A trick QUESTION?!!

Another SLAP.

CHER (O.S.)

Ow! Well you surprised me!

SYBIL(O.S.)

Well what's the answer now? With no surprise.

We can feel another slap waiting in the wings.

CHER(O.S.)
 What are you, writing a book?
 (SLAP)
 That wasn't very hard-
 (SLAP)
 Ow! Why are you hitting me?!

SYBIL (O.S.)
 'Cause at least I know you'll FEEL it!

CHER (O.S.)
 I feel it! Are you happy?

Beat. The bedsheets rustle.

SYBIL (O.S.)
 No, I'm not. Why is everything a game?

CHER(O.S.)
 Why does everything have to be so real?
 Can't we just have fun?

SYBIL(O.S.)
 Sure. It would be *fun* for me to know
 how you feel about me.

CHER (O.S.)
 That's your idea of fun?!

SYBIL (O.S.)
 Achh! Grow up!

CHER (O.S.)
 I'm up-

SYBIL (O.S.)
 Cher. No one can get close to you.

CHER
 I have an entire family who are all
 close to me!

CUT TO:

INT. ARNIE AND PHYLLIS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Arnie snores on the bed in a t-shirt and Depends adult
 diapers. Phyllis sighs heavily and goes to his side of the
 bed, lifts his legs and pulls the covers over him. She gets
 into bed, snapping off the light. Eyes closed, her brow is
 furrowed as in anger.

Arnie's snoring STOPS with a choke.

PHYLLIS
Arnie?... Arnie!

EXT. BEAUMONT HOSPITAL, EMERGENCY ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The PARAMEDICS hustle the gurney out of the ambulance as an EMERGENCY ROOM DOCTOR meets them.

PARAMEDIC
Labored breathing, BP's way up!

INT. BEAUMONT HOSPITAL, EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

The doors BURST open, Arnie is wheeled in with an oxygen mask over his face. Phyllis follows, disheveled, pulling on her sweater.

PHYLLIS
He's had two strokes.

EMERGENCY DOCTOR
What's his name?

PHYLLIS
Arnold. Arnie. Arnie Silver.

EMERGENCY DOCTOR
Arnie? Can you hear me? Arnie!

PHYLLIS
I don't think he understands-

EMERGENCY DOCTOR
Nurse!

An ER NURSE appears.

EMERGENCY DOCTOR
(to Phyllis)
Go with her, Mrs. Silver. We'll need medical information on your husband.

Phyllis is pushed out and a white curtain SWISHES in front of her face. She stands dazed, clip board in hand, like an island surrounded by people doing their jobs. She catches her own reflection in a glass and instinctively checks her hair.

INT. BEAUMONT HOSPITAL, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Phyllis dials her cell phone and listens. She has the appearance of a delicate piece of china with a crack.

PHYLLIS

Dotty? I'm at Beaumont with Arnie- I don't know. He couldn't breathe- I don't know- Can I...- Can I talk?!

(her voice tightens)

Don't call the kids, they'll just be upset- We're in emergency. Dot? Will you bring me a lipstick? I look terrible.

She hangs up and makes her way to a couch, sitting heavily, staring at nothing. A NURSE passes and Phyllis looks up with the exact smile that Cher had mimicked.

CUT TO:

INT. CHER'S APT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sybil and Cher face off in bed. The phone RINGS.

SYBIL (O.S.)

Get that and we're over. I mean it. At some point in this relationship I would like to come first.

We can feel Cher trying to make a decision. She answers. Sybil explodes from the bed...

SYBIL (O.S.)

That's it!

CLUNK.

SYBIL

Ow! DAMMIT!

The LIGHT SNAPS ON. Sybil leans against the wall holding her nose. Cher sits up in bed in a Spiderman pajama top.

CHER

Are you okay?!

SYBIL

I liked the bed where it was!

CHER

(into the phone)

Hello-

INT. RADIO STATION, SOUND BOOTH - DETROIT - 3AM

ROBBIE SILVER(39) bearded, handsome, sits behind a microphone, headphones on one ear. The lit buttons on the console reflect on his slender face in the darkened studio.

ROBBIE (O.S.)
It's your favorite brother. Did I wake
you?

Behind him are lots of vitamin bottles, some with Chinese
writing.

INTERCUT - CHER'S BEDROOM/RADIO STATION - 3AM

CHER
Hey. You just going on the air?

Sybil gets up and walks out of the room.

SYBIL
I'm going home.

CHER
(whispers to her)
Wait...

Cher realizes there's been silence on the phone.

CHER
(into the phone)
Yoohoo. Robbie?

Robbie's eyes flutter as if in a seizure. Then he stares
off into space, jaw slack.

CHER (O.S.)
Are you there?

Robbie snaps out of it. He jumps up and paces the length of
his headset wire. He pops a pill from one of the bottles.

ROBBIE
I was just thinking about Mom and Dad.
I think our whole family is afraid of
intimacy.

CHER
I resemble that remark.

Cher paces in exactly the same manner. We now see that her
pajamas are the complete Spiderman suit.

ROBBIE
Except for you. You and Sybil have got
something. Something real.
(beat)
If she actually exists.

CHER

And you ever meet her. Which I will do
my best to stop.

He chuckles. Then gets serious.

ROBBIE

You've really grown, you know.

CHER

Yeah, I groan a lot.

ROBBIE

Actually, you groan the most.

As the word game unfolds, we get the sense that within the rhythm is a familiar competition, each remark tossed out trying to top the one before. Cher distractedly plays with a rabbit puppet, still pacing.

CHER

Maybe I've OUT-groan everyone else.

ROBBIE

(laughs)

Well time to grown up, Cher.

Cher doesn't laugh at the same message delivered twice in two minutes. She tries to see down the hall.

Robbie's THEME MUSIC plays BG. The ENGINEER signals him from the booth.

ROBBIE

Gotta go.

INT. CHER'S APT, FOYER - NIGHT

Sybil is at the front door when Cher catches up.

CHER

Syb, wait-

SYBIL

You know what? I don't ask for much and I just got nothing. And I know that you totally love me.

CHER

Then what's the big deal? You need a public statement or something?

SYBIL

You'll always win the argument, Cher.
But what do you really win?

CHER

Maybe you just push too hard.

SYBIL

Tough life, huh? Saddled with a woman
who adores you and pushes too hard and
knows you better than you know
yourself.

CHER

No.

SYBIL

Yes. Like I know you can't ask me to
stay right now. You can't make it real
for even a moment. Too intimate.

(Silence)

Right.

Sybil walks out, closing the apartment door. Cher leans
into the corner, torn. And pissed. She flings open the door-
to Sybil still there.

CHER

Aggh!

SYBIL

Like I knew you'd open the door.

CHER

Oh my god, you did not!

SYBIL

I know you. Now do you have something
to say to me?

Sybil hopes, waits...

CHER

Uh.

(goes for the joke)

You forgot your toothbrush?

SYBIL

(explodes)

You know if you were *that* close to your
family you wouldn't live three thousand
miles away!

Sybil leaves Cher standing in the doorway, searching for a snappy comeback.

CHER

Oh... yeah? Well.. OK, now I'm pissed!
How's *that* for a feeling?!

Cher angrily SLAMS the door.

INT. BEAUMONT HOSPITAL, INTENSIVE CARE NURSE'S DESK - NIGHT

DOTTIE GREENBERG(69) hurries past the NURSE down the hall. She is the quintessential stereotype of the Grand Dame Jewish matriarch; long fur coat, perfect nails and hair, designer glasses, and one pearl earring in her rush to go.

Behind her, mild-mannered IRV GREENBERG(70) picks up a newspaper and sits on the couch. Reading and waiting for Dottie are two things he has mastered in his life.

EMERGENCY NURSE

Ma'am You can't go down there. I'm sorry.

DOTTIE

You're sorry? Listen, no one's gonna tell me-

DR. SCHWARTZ

Excuse me. Nurse? Is there a problem?

Handsome DOCTOR SCHWARTZ(42) approaches.

NURSE

Doctor, this is a restricted area.

DR. SCHWARTZ

I see.
(looks at Dottie)
Mrs...?

DOTTIE

Greenberg. Of Greenberg's Corned Beef and Rye. Ever hear of it?

DR. SCHWARTZ

Are you kidding? Who hasn't.

DOTTIE

That's right. So listen, you little pisher. My sister's in that room alone with her sick husband and I'm going in there. Got a problem with that, Dr...
(reads his tag)

DOTTIE (CONT'D)
Ronald Schwartz?
 (looks at him again)
Are you Hattie's boy, Ronnie?

 DR. SCHWARTZ
 (smiles broadly)
You know my mother?

 DOTTIE
Know her? I used to beat the bloomers
off her in high school basketball.

Dr. Schwartz takes Dottie's arm like an entranced gentleman caller and walks her down the hall toward Arnie's room.

 DOTTIE
Your Aunt Sylvia too. How are they?

INT. ICU, ARNIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Phyllis sits immobile, staring at Arnie. A small mechanical beep interjects as the ventilator breathes for him.

PHYLLIS'S FOOT - Crossed, dangling over her leg, shakes endlessly.

Dottie sweeps into the room and stops behind Phyllis, putting a hand gently on her shoulder. Phyllis reaches up and grabs it.

 DOTTIE
Phyll. Did you call the kids?

Phyllis shakes her head, "no." Silence.

 DOTTIE
Guess who's the doctor on call? Hattie
Schwartz's son, Ronnie. You know
between you and me I always thought he
was a little...
 (gestures with a limp wrist)
faygela.

For a moment Phyllis doesn't move. Then she makes a small strangled sound like a squirrel.

INT. ICU NURSE'S DESK - NIGHT

The nurse starts to react as the sound of choking comes from Arnie's room. She stops. Listens. It's laughter.

INT. BEAUMONT HOSPITAL, X-RAY LAB - MORNING

Arnie's lung x-rays on the light box. Phyllis stands somberly with Dr. Schwartz, Dottie and Irv behind her. Phyllis sways from side to side as the doctor speaks.

DR. SCHWARTZ

The tumor is blocking the entire lung and the lung has collapsed. The only way to get it out is to operate and, frankly, in your husband's frail condition he'd never survive. We can keep him alive on the machines-

PHYLLIS

Oh, no. He signed a living will. No machines.

DOTTIE

Phyll. You have to call the kids. This isn't the time for one of your little secrets.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANCIE'S APT, BEDROOM - WASHINGTON, D.C.- MORNING

The same Silver family PHOTO hangs on the wall. FRANCIE SILVER(42) is propped up in bed with a cup of coffee. On her bedside table is a dusty "victory" trophy holding a wreath.

THE ENGRAVED BASE READS - "To our best little girl on her birthday. Love, Mom and Dad."

FRANCIE closes her eyes and digs into a small cloth bag. One by one she pulls out three Nordic Runes and lays the stones face down on the kerchief spread in front of her. She turns over the runes one at a time. The last one is BLANK. Francie GASPS. The PHONE RINGS.

CUT TO:

A button LIGHTS UP on a console as a silent phone rings.

We are...

INT. RADIO STATION, SOUND BOOTH - 6AM

Robbie talks into the mic, headset on.

ROBBIE (CONT)

So I see two people who are so self-involved, they can't do the right thing for their child. And has your son ever seen you and your wife make up after a fight?

MALE CALLER (O.C)

(on the phone)

But my wife's crazy! She's absolutely mentally unbalanced-

Robbie PRESSES the button, cutting the caller off. He presses another button.

ROBBIE

Brenda. You're on the air with Dr. Silver.

Robbie opens one of the Chinese bottles and pops a tab. In the BG the ENGINEER in the control room answers the phone.

BRENDA (V.O.)

(screams to her children)

Tiffany! Untie your brother!

(to Robbie)

Hi Dr. Silver. I just caught my eleven year old daughter sneaking out to meet a sixteen year old boy.

CLOSE ON ROBBIE'S PAPER - He has written "Brenda" but his handwriting turns unintelligible. Now it just stops, frozen.

ROBBIE stares into space, unfocused. Something's wrong.

BRENDA (V.O.)

Dr. Silver?

BEAT. Silence.

A KNOCKING sound as the engineer knocks on the glass to get Robbie's attention. He points at the phone in his hand. Robbie BLINKS a couple of times and "comes to."

The SOUND of Brenda's OC children laughing and screaming in the BG bleeds into...

CUT TO:

EXT. SAMUEL'S SILVER'S HOUSE, UPSTATE NEW YORK - MORNING

The sound of NOISY CHILDREN fills the air over the modest home among close-set houses. Five young orthodox Jewish CHILDREN play in the front. Toys litter the porch.

INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE, HOME OFFICE - MORNING

SAMUEL SILVER(41) studies a book intently. He wears a white yamulka on his head, an untrimmed dark beard and long side curls tucked behind his ears in the tradition of the ultra orthodox Jew.

One leg crossed over the other, his foot dangles, unnoticed, shaking with excess energy. The office door bursts open and TWO YOUNG CHILDREN race in. The boy wears long side curls and a yamulka like his father.

BOY

Tatti! Is shark kosher?

SAMUEL

Well, let's see. Does it have bones?

BOY

No!

SAMUEL

What does it have?

BOY

Ummm...

GIRL

Carpillage!

SAMUEL

Close enough. No bones, not kosher.

GIRL

I told you!

BOY

(yells OC to other kids)
It isn't!

They run out. He calls after them.

SAMUEL

Wash up for breakfast! And turn off the water this time! I'm not made of money.

Samuel's wife, SHOSHANNA(35), pops her head around the door. She wears a head scarf and holds a BABY.

SHOSHANNA

Shmuel, I told them not to disturb you.

SAMUEL

It's all right. I'm not learning a thing.

She comes in and closes the door. He sighs.

SAMUEL

Just tell me I'm a better father than my-

The phone RINGS.

CUT TO:

EXT. GOLDMAN HOUSE, BLOOMFIELD HILLS - MORNING

Sun peaks through the crisp bare trees, waiting for snow.

INT. GOLDMAN HOUSE, VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

A bulletin board labeled "Names for Twins" with index cards in neat rows. From the next room, an OC TV blares.

VICTORIA SILVER-GOLDMAN(31) is propped up in bed, very pregnant, with a calculator and a clip board. On her night stand is the same picture of the Silver family that was in Phyllis's kitchen and on Francie's wall.

VICTORIA

(calls out)

Norm? NORM!!

INT. GOLDMAN LIVING ROOM - MORNING

NORM GOLDMAN(41), a handsome slug of a man, stands in his pajamas, OJ in hand, mesmerized by the tube.

ON THE TV - A leopard tears apart a fawn on the Serengeti.

INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Victoria sighs and struggles with her heavy body.

VICTORIA

Norman!!

INT. GOLDMAN LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Victoria waddles out and stands with hands on hips.

NORM

Hey. You're supposed to stay in bed.

VICTORIA

You know some couples play Mozart to their unborn babies in the womb.

NORM

(turns down the volume)

All you have to do is ask.

Victoria sighs. The phone RINGS.

CUT TO:

INT. MUGSY'S CAR - MORNING

Cher leans over the back seat, repacking her open suitcase.

MUGSY

That cop is gonna ticket me cause you don't have a seat belt. And then I'll have to kill you.

(Cher sits back down)

Did you call Sybil?

CHER

No.

MUGSY

You gotta call. What are you gonna do, leave town and keep it a secret?

CHER

She told me to grow up.

MUGSY

(faux horror)

That bitch.

CHER

You call.

MUGSY

I'm not gonna call. You call.

They pass signs that say LAX.

CHER

Maybe this is better. I never feel more trapped than when I'm with someone.

MUGSY

And when you're single you never stop looking for someone to be with.

CHER

I know the answer.

MUGSY

You're a fucking nut?

Cher shrugs as if to say: "isn't it obvious?"

INT. AIRPLANE - LATER

Cher plays video games on an old Gameboy. The MAN next to her leans over.

MAN

I used to have one of those!

CHER

1989.

MAN

Wow. Haven't seen one in years.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Excuse me. You'll have to put that away.

Cher sighs and stuffs the Gameboy into her bag. She puts on headphones and taps her ringed finger to the music, looking at her reflection in the window.

CUT TO:

INT. ANOTHER AIRPLANE - DAY

CLOSE ON A BOOK COVER: "The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying"

Francie reads and drains a vodka tonic. She is unaware of the constant shaking of her foot hanging from her crossed leg. A FLIGHT ATTENDANT brings another drink.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Are you heading home or doing business?

FRANCIE

I'm going to a... going away party for my father.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

That's so sweet. Do you have a big family?

FRANCIE

Just me.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Well, I hope it's a helluva bash.

The flight attendant continues down the aisle.

CUT TO:

EXT. DETROIT METRO AIRPORT - DAY

Irv's car pulls away from the curb.

INT. IRV'S CAR - DAY

Dottie fixes her hair in the passenger seat and uses the mirror to look at Cher in the back seat.

Cher studies her Peter Pan watch. She twists the watch fob back and forth and Peter's arm "waves" at her. She smiles.

DOTTIE

God Bless your father, he was never kind to my sister.

IRV

Dottie.

DOTTIE

What? Everybody knows Arnie and I didn't get along.

CHER

How's my Mom?

DOTTIE

Exhausted. She's been taking care of your father for twelve years.

(to Irv)

Turn here, Irv.

IRV

I know, Dottie.

(corrects her)

And it's not twelve years.

DOTTIE

Eleven. That was his first stroke.

Cher hunkers down into her seat and looks out the window.

CHER'S POV OUT THE WINDOW - A heavily belted worker holds a jack hammer biting DATADATADATA into the concrete, almost drowning out the next dialogue... she wishes.

DOTTIE (O.S.)

And Victoria's blood pressure is so high,
she could have a stroke.

IRV (O.S.)

Dottie!

DOTTIE

Let me tell you something. You better
get Francie and Victoria to patch
things up but fast.

CHER

Ive tried but-

DOTTIE

It's ridiculous! Two sisters not
speaking. Over the family business of
all things!

IRV

Dottie, enough already!

DOTTIE

Turn right, Irv.

IRV

For Christ sake, you think I've never
been to the airport before?
(he stops at a cross street)
Ok. Which way?

DOTTIE

Left.

(to Cher)

Your brother's driving in from New York
right now.

CHER

Driving? Why?

DOTTIE

(shrugs)

There's a kid who's been fighting the
world since he was born.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Samuel's maroon mini van HONKS, stuck in a traffic jam.

INT. SAMUEL'S VAN - DAY

Samuel hits the wheel.

SAMUEL

Dammit!

A lecture drones from the speakers.

REBBE (V.O.)

And when you've found your salvation as
a good Jew, the result is inner peace.

Samuel begins to cry. He pulls out a handkerchief with shaking hands, holding it to his eyes.

INT. ICU, ARNIE'S ROOM - DAY

The ventilator HISSES loudly as Francie stands next to her father's bed.

FRANCIE

(whispers)

Oh, please. Please take him God.

(starts to cry)

Oh, Daddy.

Phyllis is there and tries to pull her daughter into a hug but Francie pulls away and sobs into her hands.

INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Victoria shifts uncomfortably in bed. Strewn around her are trophy figures and various wood bases. She tries out different figures on bases.

She sighs and looks at a small shining trophy at her bed side. She picks it up and reads the engraved plate at the bottom: "To Victoria, our best little girl on her birthday. Love, Mom and Dad."

Victoria tears up. She dials the phone.

VICTORIA

Roberta?- Not so good.

She begins to weep but pulls it together.

VICTORIA

I need to schedule a manicure.

INT. ICU, NURSE'S DESK - DAY

Samuel passes TWO ICU NURSES at the desk. They look up and stare at his black coat, beard, side curls and black hat. The first Nurse looks knowingly at the second.

ICU NURSE #1

Jewish.

INT. ICU, ARNIE'S ROOM - DAY

Samuel enters, ignoring Francie and Phyllis and goes to the foot of the bed. He looks at his father.

SAMUEL

Hang in there, Dad. Keep fighting.

Samuel pulls a prayer book from his pocket, opens it, and sways, praying in Hebrew over Arnie. Francie rolls her eyes.

PHYLLIS

Samuel. He didn't believe in all that.

Samuel ignores his mother and continues to pray. Phyllis walks out of the room but Francie stays, on silent guard.

INT. HOSPITAL ELEVATOR - DAY

Cher stands stone-still in the elevator. She gives a slight hop in the air... just testing.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Cher walks down the hall with all the courage of the Cowardly Lion. As she approaches Arnie's room she hears Samuel's Hebrew prayer rising and falling. She flattens herself against the wall, peering unseen, into the room.

CHER'S POV INTO ARNIE'S ROOM - Samuel prays over Arnie. Francie, arms folded, eyes him with distrust.

Cher slips by the door and keeps walking, full of anxiety. Her cell phone RINGS, jolting her up against the wall.

CHER

(answers the phone)

What!- Yes, this is she- No, I can't
book a job right- American Express?!
Hold on. Let me check my schedule.

Cher holds the phone away, silently and painfully mouths the words "Shit! Shit! SHIT!" She collects herself.

CHER
Ummm. I can be back in LA by-

NURSE
Excuse me. You'll have to turn off your
cell phone. Are you with the Silver
family? You just passed the room.

INT. ICU, ARNIE'S ROOM - DAY

Cher sidles in and sees Arnie for the first time.

CHER
Jesus Christ.

Samuel STOPS, then picks up his droning Hebrew again.
Phyllis gives Cher's hand a tight squeeze.

INT. HOSPITAL, FAMILY WAITING ROOM - DAY (LATER)

The lights are low as Cher, Francie, Samuel and Phyllis sit waiting. Dottie and Irv sit quietly next to them. The tension in the room is palpable. Cher gets up and pulls a chair over from the other side of the room. She takes the chair next to it and moves it closer. The others exchange glances. Cher picks up the end of a sofa.

SAMUEL
What are you doing!?

PHYLLIS
Samuel. Leave her alone.

SAMUEL
It's Shmuel, Mother.

PHYLLIS
I'll call you what I named you.

Cher puts down the couch end and sits heavily.

CHER
Where's Robbie?

PHYLLIS
I left him a message.
(to Francie)
Did they feed you on the flight?

Francie sighs in exasperation at the question.

FRANCIE
Mother, I'm tired.

CHER
I got peanuts and pretzels.

PHYLLIS
Oh.
(beat)
That's what I was making for dinner.

Cher looks up sharply. Then she realizes it was a joke. She keeps a dead-pan face.

CHER
Francie could always fricassee a chicken.

Beat. They wait. Dottie and Irv exchange worried looks. Samuel leans forward with the Silver word game and the same dead-pan look.

SAMUEL
It would have to cross the road.

CHER
Well that's her cross to bear.

PHYLLIS
Why would a bear wear a cross?

They snicker. Francie can't stand it any longer. She finally takes the dangling bait.

FRANCIE
Why not? The pope can shit in the woods.

They all laugh. Dr. Schwartz enters. They all stand.

THE FAMILY MEMBERS unknowingly sway from side to side in complete rhythm with each other.

Dr. Schwartz starts to speak but averts his eyes to keep from getting seasick.

DR. SCHWARTZ
I know the whole family's not present
but your mother has informed me that
this will be sufficient for what we
have to discuss.
(beat)
Your mother has decided to honor your
father's living will and terminate his
life support.

The swaying STOPS. Francie exhales, holding back sobs.

DR. SCHWARTZ
At any rate, I-

SAMUEL
Let me ask you something, Doctor. This
is how you'd treat your own father?

The Doctor clears his throat, uncomfortable. Samuel picks
up angry steam.

SAMUEL
This is how modern medicine operates?
Pull the plug and bang you're dead?

PHYLLIS
Samuel. That's not fair.

SAMUEL
Where's the respect for human life? The
man is here for, what? Five hours?! And
now he's just a slab of meat to get rid
of? Jewish law says-

DR. SCHWARTZ
Respectfully, sir, under American law-

SAMUEL
American law evidently allows for murder.

CHER
It's not murder-

SAMUEL
(yelling)
It's the same as if they threw him out
this window!

Cher sits down at the power of Samuel's fury.

DR. SCHWARTZ
You must consider the quality of life-

SAMUEL
Who's to say what quality of life is
too little? You?! Him? God decides
these things. It may come as a surprise
to you, Doctor, but you're not God!

FRANCIE
Let him go. It's what he wanted.

Samuel slams out of the room. Cher sits, leg crossed over,
foot shaking. Her thumbs work the buttons on the powered
off Gameboy. Phyllis holds her head in her hands.

DOTTIE

Phyll. You can't let your yeshiva-bucher son run your family.

DR. SCHWARTZ

Legally, the choice is yours, Mrs. Silver.

They all turn to Phyllis. She gets up and walks out.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

A frantic Samuel, on the pay phone bursts into tears.

SAMUEL

Rabbi! They're going to kill him!

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Cher finds Phyllis leaning against the wall. She sighs, leans next to her, looking for the right words.

Phyllis is barely aware of Cher's presence.

PHYLLIS

So. If I honor my husband's wishes, my son will never speak to me again.

Phyllis shakes her head and walks away, leaving Cher alone. Cher tries her cell - no signal. She sees the pay phones.

INT. ROBBIE'S CONDO, BEDROOM - DAY

The phone RINGS. Robbie sits in a stupor in a t-shirt and underwear. His eyes flutter, he gets up to answer.

ROBBIE'S POV OF HIS BEDROOM - a swirling maelstrom of bright lights. The SOUND swims.

Robbie's legs buckle and he goes down.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Cher impatiently hangs up and looks at her watch. Two pay phones over, Samuel hangs up from his call. They stare.

SAMUEL

Someone has to do the right thing.

CHER

(sarcastic)

Lucky you. Most people live their whole lives trying to figure out what the "right thing" is.

SAMUEL
 (looks pointedly at her)
 Obviously.

He walks away. Cher is furious. She flops down in the waiting area and pulls out her Gameboy.

CLOSE ON THE GAMEBOY SCREEN - The tiny blips move around. We peer over the screen at an anxious MOTHER and FATHER and their YOUNG DAUGHTER. The father holds his sleeping daughter on his lap and kisses her softly on the head. He smiles at the exhausted mother and squeezes her hand. PUSH IN CLOSER...

SWEEP ACROSS TO:

START FLASHBACK

A little hand wipes away fog on the window. Cher(4) races down the hall in Superman feet pajamas. We are...

INT. SILVER HOUSE, HALLWAY MORNING (SAME AGES AS IN P.1)

When she reaches Arnie's office door, little Cher stops and flattens herself against the wall, hiding. She peeks in...

INT. ARNIE'S HOME OFFICE - MORNING

Arnie sits at his desk, scratches a huge black and white cat, PANDA, draped across his paperwork. Cher streaks past his doorway as quickly as she can, but-

ARNIE
 Cherilyn!

She edges in and stands in the doorway. Arnie hands her some Easter Seals stamps.

ARNIE
 Do you like these?

CHER
 What are they?

ARNIE
 They're stamps. You lick them on the back and stick them on things.

Cher breaks into a sunny smile as Arnie hands them to her.

ARNIE
 But not if you wet the bed again.

Arnie reaches down to hug her but Cher backs away and runs out. Arnie's smile fades as he watches her. He pets Panda.

ARNIE
You and me, eh Panda?

INT. CHER AND VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Phyllis billows a rubber sheet over a twin bed.

CHER
(waves the stamps)
Mommy, look what I got!

PHYLLIS
Don't you want to be a big girl? Hmmm?
Big girls don't wet the bed.

Cher's excitement drains away. She sticks her tongue out at Victoria standing in the crib.

CHER
Stupid!

Victoria starts to cry as Robbie scampers in.

ROBBIE
Mommy! Can Margie Wayne and me get married!?

Phyllis is unravelling. She balls up the soiled sheets and lifts the screaming baby out of the crib. Robbie continues to run around in a circle.

PHYLLIS
Robbie, stop running!
(to the baby)
Shhh...

ROBBIE
(he stops momentarily)
Watch this, Mommy. When I grow up I'm gonna run for a job. Watch this!

He starts running in circles again. Cher waves her stamps.

CHER
Look what Daddy gave me!

PHYLLIS
Robbie, go get Francie.

ROBBIE
(runs out)
I'm getting married!

A moment later, a SCREAM from down the hall.

FRANCIE (O.S.)
Get out of here, you brat!

Francie, in her underwear, chases Robbie down the hall past Phyllis and the baby.

PHYLLIS
Robbie! Stop running! Francie! Come here! I need you.

FRANCIE
(glowering)
I don't need you.

PHYLLIS
Take the baby. I have to make the bed.

FRANCIE
Daddy didn't say I have to!

Arnie comes in, tying his tie.

ARNIE
What's all the noise about?

CHER
Robbie's getting married, Daddy!

FRANCIE
Daddy! Just because Cher wet the bed, why do I have to do all the work?

ARNIE
For Christ sake, Phyll! Can't you get Luvinia for that?
(calls out)
Luvinia!

Francie shoots her mother a triumphant look and walks out. Phyllis tries to balance the baby, the balled up urine sheet and her fury with Arnie.

PHYLLIS
Listen. When I tell our daughter to do something I don't expect to get undermined!

At the sound of raised voices Cher crawls under her desk.

ARNIE
If you can't handle things around here
by yourself-

PHYLLIS
By myself! That's the problem!

Sammy chases Robbie into the room and corners him. He punches Robbie in the arm and Robbie SCREAMS.

SAMMY
Get the hell away from me! Maggot!

ROBBIE
(crying)
Mommy! Sammy hit me. And he said hell!

ARNIE
(to Robbie)
You! Stop that crying! Don't be a
sissy.

Robbie cries harder.

ARNIE
You want me to really give you
something to cry about? Now stop it!

Robbie snuffles and hiccups. LUVINIA(30), an African American woman in a domestic uniform, enters, drying wet hands on a dish towel. Arnie walks out and Phyllis hands the screaming baby to Luvinia. Phyllis shakes Sammy.

PHYLLIS
You don't hit your brother!

UNDER THE DESK - Within her sanctuary Cher begins to play, making two plastic horses fight each other.

SAMMY (O.S.)
I didn't!

PHYLLIS (O.S.)
He's your brother!
(almost screaming)
You take care of your brother!

Sammy breaks free, trying not to cry.

SAMMY
You're crazy! I'm running away!

PHYLLIS
Fine!

Phyllis throws open the closet door, grabs a small suitcase from the shelf and throws it violently at Sammy's feet.

PHYLLIS

Here!

Sammy's hurt is masked by his anger as Phyllis stalks out.

INT. SILVER KITCHEN - DAY

Phyllis empties the dishwasher while Luvinia feeds Victoria in the high chair. Cher eats peanut butter on a spoon.

CHER

(to Luvinia)

Vinia, Daddy gave me stamps!

LUVINIA

That's wonderful, Honey.

Sammy sidles around the corner with his suitcase.

SAMMY

Ok. I'm leaving now.

PHYLLIS

Ok. I hope you find a new family.

SAMMY

Don't worry, I will.

A tortured high pitched WAIL...

ROBBIE

SAMMY!

INT. SILVER HALLWAY - DAY

Robbie runs to the door. Phyllis's hand finds her heart at the panic in her son's voice.

ROBBIE

You forgot your toothbrush!

(no answer)

You're missing my wedding!

EXT. SILVER DRIVEWAY - DAY

CLOSE ON - The needle is dropped on a 45 record. The Wedding March plays.

Francie, Cher, Phyllis and Luvinia with the baby are gathered together with assorted NEIGHBORS.

From behind a hanging blanket we can see small excited movements. Robbie and little MARGIE WAYNE step proudly out.

The neighbors start to laugh. Phyllis FREEZES into her Mona Lisa smile... Robbie is in the bridal gown.

EXT. SILVER DRIVEWAY - AFTERNOON (LATER)

Cher watches as her mother's car pulls out of the driveway, crunching grey salted sludge under the tires.

INT. PHYLLIS'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Phyllis drives looking as if she's about to cry. Panda's black and white head appears in the back seat.

EXT. FIELD - AFTERNOON

Phyllis's car pulls up. The car door opens and Panda is pushed out. The car squeals away.

INT. PHYLLIS'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Phyllis sobs, gripping the wheel. She looks in the rear view mirror at the small black and white furry creature and sobs harder. Then she SNAPS on the radio and gradually stops crying. She gets the beat of the music, tapping her wedding ring on the steering wheel. Her face takes on that same empty smile.

INT. SILVER BATHROOM - NIGHT

Phyllis bundles the baby in a towel out of the bath.

INT. SILVER LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cher Robbie and Francie watch TV.

CHER
Where's Panda?

The SOUND of the garage door opening...

PHYLLIS (O.S.)
Your father's home!

The kids scatter... except Francie who runs *toward* the garage.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Arnie sits in his car, hesitant, tired. Through the door he hears the baby's SCREAMS and Phyllis' muffled yell and his shoulders sag. Then he straightens and sighs.

INT. CHER AND VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cher sits on her bed, pretending to read a book. She hears Arnie's jangling change in his pockets as he approaches down the hall. Closer. The jangling STOPS.

ARNIE (O.S.)

Shit!

The door opens.

ARNIE

What the hell is this?!

He points to the Easter Seal stamps in neat rows affixed to the bedroom door.

CHER

Ss-stamps. You told me to-

Arnie grabs Cher by the arm and SPANKS her hard.

ARNIE

You get those off of there right now,
God dammit!

Cher melts into tears and crawls under her desk. Cher's sobs hold Arnie for a moment in the hall. He turns to go back in, but stops, rubbing his aching forehead.

INT. SILVER KITCHEN - NIGHT

Francie dances around Arnie as Phyllis heats leftovers.

FRANCIE

I'll make dinner, Daddy! I can
fricassee a chicken!

PHYLLIS

Francie, bed.

Arnie pets Francie's head.

ARNIE

She can stay up, Phyll.

(to Francie)

Fricassee a chicken, huh?

Phyllis is furious. Francie beams up at her father. Something catches Arnie's eye and he opens the kitchen sliding door with a smile. A bedraggled Panda comes in. Phyllis and Panda glare at each other.

END FLASHBACK

INT. HOSPITAL, FAMILY WAITING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON - PRESENT

Francie slouches in the chair, huddled under a blanket, unable to sleep. She starts to cry and stops herself.

INT. ICU, ARNIE'S ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Phyllis sits in the chair next to Arnie accompanied by the ever-present hiss of the ventilator.

PHYLLIS

Well? Not exactly what we expected.

Cher peeks around the corner and watches her mother, a mixture of fear and longing in her face.

EXT. GOLDMAN HOUSE - NIGHT

The snow falls under the moonless sky.

INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Norm sleeps but Victoria shifts, trying to find one comfortable place. She suddenly puts a hand to her belly.

VICTORIA

(smiles and whispers)

Norm? You want to feel something?

Norm SNORES. Victoria's smile fades in the emptiness.

INT. ROBBIE'S CONDO, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Robbie lies on the floor. He pulls the phone toward him by the cord, inch by inch.

INT. SILVER HOUSE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Phyllis and Cher sit at the large formal dining table, dwarfed by its size. Cher looks up a few times as if to say something but Phyllis simply drinks soup and thumbs through a Neiman-Marcus catalogue.

CHER

Mom? Um, Robbie thinks we have trouble being intimate in our family. Do you?

PHYLLIS

Not really dear. You know I saw some nice slippers for you in one of these catalogues.

CHER
I don't need slippers.

PHYLLIS
I have to go through the stack.
Victoria's always yelling at me to throw
them away.

She shows Cher a picture of slippers.

PHYLLIS
There. You like those?

CHER
I guess. But what I was-
(sees the picture)
Oh! Those are nice.

The phone RINGS and Phyllis moves to the kitchen.

CLOSE ON A CATALOGUE PICTURE OF WHITE FUZZY SLIPPERS.

PHYLLIS (O.S.)
I thought you'd like them.
(answers the phone)
Hello?
(panicked)
Robbie?!

CUT TO:

INT. BEAUMONT HOSPITAL, INFECTIOUS DISEASE WARD - NIGHT

A GREY HAired DOCTOR stands with Phyllis and Cher.

GREY HAired DOCTOR
The AIDS virus is in the brain.

Phyllis looks around in embarrassment at the mention of the
word "AIDS" to see if anyone has heard.

GREY HAired DOCTOR
He's showing signs of dementia. How
long has he been HIV positive?

PHYLLIS
(lowering her voice)
About 11 years.

GREY HAired DOCTOR
The fever seems to be exacerbating the
symptoms.

GREY HAired DOCTOR (CONT'D)
So we're bringing the temperature down
and hopefully he'll regain some of the
brain function. What AIDS medications
is he on?

CHER
None. He's does alternative healing.

The doctor sighs in disgust.

PHYLLIS
Can we start him on some drugs? For
the...
(lowers her voice)
...you know.

CHER
He'll never agree to it.

GREY HAired DOCTOR
Without his permission we can't do it.

PHYLLIS
But I'm his mother.

GREY HAired DOCTOR
Do you have Medical Power of Attorney?
(silence)
Without that paperwork, as soon as he's
stable we have to release him.

PHYLLIS
But he can't be on his own like this!

GREY HAired DOCTOR
You can try to care for him at home. Or
you can look into hospice care. Of
course they won't give him life-
sustaining aid. I'm sorry. I wish there
was a better solution.

INT. SYBIL'S APARTMENT - LOS ANGELES - 2AM (P.S.T.)

Sybil, covered in paint smears, pushes her hair out of her face, leaving a smudge on her forehead. She sits in front of her latest canvas. The phone RINGS and she grabs it.

CLOSE ON THE OIL PAINTING - A brightly colored impressionist rendition: Cher, Sybil, Mugsy, Wendy and Lisa laugh together.

SYBIL (O.S.)
 Hello?
 (silence)
 Hello...

INTERCUT SILVER HOUSE/ SYBIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cher sits under her childhood desk on the carpet with her Gameboy off, but in her lap. Her voice is tight with panic.

CHER
 Ok, you know what I'd do if a plane
 landed on the freeway?

SYBIL
 Heyyy. Are you okay? I've been so
 worried.

CHER
 Bail out.

SYBIL
 Cher?
 (silence)
 I could hop a plane and be there by
 tomorrow morning.
 (still silence)
 You want some company?

CHER
 I'm still the same age as when you
 left.

That hurts Sybil. She just sighs into the phone.

ON THE PAINTING - The friends laugh in a whisper...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL OUTDOOR AREA - SUNRISE

Samuel sits on a bench whispering in Hebrew. His breath fogs the cold air as he bobs back and forth, eyes closed. A leather strap around his head holds a small leather box in place on his forehead. Another box is strapped around his wrist.

INT. SILVER HOUSE, KITCHEN - SUNRISE

Dottie and Phyllis sit at the kitchen table in silence. Dottie's cigarette smoke mingles with the steam from her coffee.

DOTTIE
Why didn't you tell me, Phyll?

 PHYLLIS
What's to tell? He's gay?
 (beat)
Fine. He's gay.

Dottie smokes in the silence between the sisters.

 DOTTIE
Well, you can't take care of him. Not
with everything going on. We'll just
have to put him somewhere till we can
figure it out. I mean there are drugs
now-

 PHYLLIS
You know what Arnie said when I put him
to bed last week? He looked at me and
said: "You're a good wife."
 (beat)
You know what I thought? "Now you tell
me."

Dottie looks at Phyllis and realizes she's going to have to
take control. She digs through some crap on the counter and
slaps a phone book down.

EXT. HOSPICE OF THE GOOD ANGELS - MORNING

A brick building separated from the road by snow covered
grounds and an American flag.

INT. HOSPICE OF THE GOOD ANGELS - MORNING

Dottie and Phyllis walk into a hushed, carpeted foyer. A
marble statue of Mary and the Baby Jesus greets them.

 PHYLLIS
Oh, Jesus.

 DOTTIE
Shh. At least it's clean. He'll never
know it's Catholic.

 SISTER MICHAEL(O.S.)
May I help you?

They turn to SISTER MICHAEL in full nun's habit. Phyllis
looks dryly at Dottie. Dottie smiles politely at Sister.

EXT. GOLDMAN HOUSE - MORNING

Norm scrapes ice from the windshield while the car idles.

INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Victoria is propped up in bed, talking on the phone, while Cher examines the baby names on the bulletin board.

VICTORIA
(on the phone)
Just re-do the placque he scratched and
pack it separately.

CLOSE ON THE BOARD - Colored index cards, each with a name printed on it, are paired together. Cher writes in:
"Batman" and "Robin."

VICTORIA (O.S.)
Get that out today. OK. Bye.

VICTORIA hangs up and huffs in agitation. Cher drops the pen like a naughty child.

VICTORIA
Well. Another inept employee of Dad's.
I don't know how he managed before me.

CHER
Vic? Can we talk about Francie?

VICTORIA
You know the doctor's constantly
telling me how much danger I'm in.
They're talking about high blood
pressure and strokes.

Cher waits for an answer. Finally...

VICTORIA
It's not MY fault! It was a stupid idea
to try to put Francie into the business
Dad and I built.

CHER
You mean that *Grandpa* and his *Dad*
built.

VICTORIA
I made it run right. Then "Her Royal
Highness" comes home and everybody
kowtows, Why? Why is everyone always
pussyfooting around Francie?!

CHER
'Cause she's always leaving.

VICTORIA
Yeah. She left the company after a month!

CHER
You know why.

VICTORIA
Mercury was in retrograde or some other crap! *I've* tried. She's the one who hasn't spoken to me in years.

CHER
Vic. You kinda replaced her.

VICTORIA
Oh you've had way too much therapy.

CHER
I didn't know that was possible.

Norm comes in, blowing on his hands.

NORM
Ok. I'm off.

VICTORIA
Will you pick up some orange juice on your way home tonight?

NORM
Can't it wait till the weekend?

VICTORIA
Norm! Just do what I'm asking you. It's one little thing.

NORM
Fine.

VICTORIA
Fine.

He leaves the room and Cher realizes she's just witnessed her parents' relationship. Victoria sighs and leans back.

VICTORIA
I just wanted for my kids what we had... a big happy family. I always thought it would be great to take them over to play with Dad.

CHER
 (totally confused)
 We are talking about *our* Dad, right?

VICTORIA
 I just feel like it's all falling apart.
 He knew so much about everything.

CHER
 Except fathering. And kindness. Love...

VICTORIA
 Whatever.

INT. HOSPITAL, FAMILY WAITING ROOM - MORNING

Phyllis, Dottie and Cher are there with Francie looking ragged. Cher's foot shakes a mile a minute and she absent-mindedly plays with the Kurukulla charm around her neck.

RABBI HERSHFELD (65), graying at the temples, dressed in a suit and tie with a black yalmukah on his head, sits next to Phyllis.

RABBI HERSHFELD
 And Dottie, how is Irv?

DOTTIE
 He's fine, Rabbi. Can't find his way
 out of a paper bag, but otherwise fine.

Samuel comes in and Phyllis and Rabbi Hershfeld stand. The Rabbi puts out his hand to shake Samuel's.

RABBI HERSHFELD
 Samuel. Good to see you again.

Samuel clasps his hands behind his back and nods. The Rabbi slowly retracts his hand.

Doctor Schwartz enters followed by NURSE HOLLOWAY, a middle aged waspish looking woman. Dottie introduces Rabbi Hershfeld to the doctor while Phyllis pulls Samuel aside.

PHYLLIS
 Don't be rude to the Rabbi, Samuel.

SAMUEL
 (correcting her)
 Shmuel, Mother. And he's not my Rabbi.

PHYLLIS
 He's still *my* Rabbi.

SAMUEL

Barely even a Jew.

PHYLLIS

Well then what am I? What's your father? Did you even visit your brother?

(silence)

For God's sakes, he's two floors up!

SAMUEL

(ignores her)

Doctor. I've talked to the Rebbie and what we want to know is this: is there any function that you have to do to the machine that would demand that my father be off of it for any period of time?

There is a collective held breath as the family waits. A sudden LOUD SCRAPING NOISE and they all turn with a GASP. Cher STOPS, mid-chair rearrange.

CHER

Sorry.

SAMUEL

If there is, and you just didn't restore him to the machine, he could die naturally not because of something we did.

DR. SCHWARTZ

Well, we have to clean the pump, how often Nurse?

NURSE HOLLOWAY

Every twelve hours. We do take him off the machine for a few seconds then.

Francie glances at Cher, who looks frozen, waiting.

NURSE HOLLOWAY

We could clean the pump and leave Mr. Silver off the machine.

SAMUEL

The Rebbie says that under Jewish law that would be a natural death.

CHER

(stands suddenly)

Wait. What's the difference? Yesterday it wasn't ok-

SAMUEL
The Rebbie determined it!

CHER
But-

Francie SLAPS Cher's arm, silencing her.

RABBI HERSHFELD
And when would you do this?

NURSE HOLLOWAY
(looks at her watch)
...in about eight hours.

RABBI HERSHFELD
Phyllis?

Phyllis looks at Francie who gestures "about time." Phyllis looks to Cher. Cher shrugs with disgust and nods.

PHYLLIS
I think we should go ahead.

DR. SCHWARTZ
I'll make the arrangements.

Doctor Schwartz leaves the room.

RABBI HERSHFELD
(to Dottie and Phyllis)
That would make it at 8pm and today's Monday. I would be able to do the funeral-
(takes out a pocket calendar)
Let's see. I have a Bar Mitzvah tomorrow.
(decides)
Tomorrow night.

Rabbi Hershfeld starts writing in his calendar.

PHYLLIS
Oh. No! It can't be tomorrow night, I won't have the house ready for guests.

The Rabbi erases his writing.

RABBI HERSHFELD
Well... I have a consecration on Wednesday afternoon. I guess I could fit the funeral in on Wednesday morning if it's early enough. We'll still be within the 48 hour limit.

RABBI HERSHFELD (CONT'D)
(writes in the date)
Alright then.
(takes Phyllis's hand)
I'll talk to you tonight, Dear.

He walks out. Cher turns and looks out the window. A lone worker shovels the snow away from the entrance walkway.

FRANCIE (O.S.)
(to the nurse)
Will he be in any pain?

NURSE HOLLOWAY (O.S.)
No. What will happen is this...

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - MORNING

Dottie catches up with the Rabbi part way down the hall.

DOTTIE
Rabbi?

INT. HOSPITAL FAMILY WAITING ROOM - MORNING

Nurse Holloway is explaining the basics.

NURSE HOLLOWAY
Once we remove the breathing apparatus
he'll just go to sleep. He'll be gone
in about five minutes.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - MORNING

Dottie walks with Rabbi Hershfeld.

DOTTIE
May I ask you something?

RABBI HERSHFELD
Certainly, Dottie.

DOTTIE
How much money do you suppose Irv and I
have given the synagogue over the years?

Rabbi Hershfeld stops walking.

RABBI HERSHFELD
You've always been extremely generous.

DOTTIE
Then you won't mind what I'm about to
say.

RABBI HERSHFELD
Of course not.

DOTTIE
(her demeanor changes)
You will damn well move that god damned
consecration and be there for my sister,
or I will cut you off so hard you'll
think you just had a second circumcision!
You got that, you ungrateful son of a
bitch?

The Rabbi's face is white, his smile frozen in place.

INT. HOSPITAL, FAMILY WAITING ROOM - MORNING

Phyllis stands next to Cher watching the shoveler outside
on the walk. He finishes the walk and moves on.

PHYLLIS
That's something isn't it? He just
shovels. And then he's all done.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPICE OF THE GOOD ANGELS - DAY

Phyllis, Dottie and Sister Michael walk down the snowy
walkway. Cher follows paces away, pushing Robbie in a
wheelchair. Robbie has impaired motor nerve function and
his eyes have trouble focusing. Cher leans down to him.

CHER
(thumbs toward the Sister)
Hey, who's the penguin?

No answer. Cher straightens and tries to fight down her
rising panic.

SISTER MICHAEL
We're here to make the transition
easier, to help people to return to God
as comfortably as possible.

INT. ROBBIE'S HOSPICE ROOM - DAY

From the bed, Robbie looks around silently, like a baby
bird trying to focus. Phyllis tucks him in and then moves
the chair and rearranges the items on the table.

PHYLLIS
This looks better over here...

Cher watches her mother and her brother. Suddenly her breaths come in shaky jagged gasps. Dottie takes Cher's arm and pulls her into the hall.

INT. HOSPICE HALLWAY - DAY

Dottie lowers her voice.

DOTTIE
Buck up, kiddo.

Cher's breathing starts to slow.

DOTTIE
Listen, it's going to be up to you to get Robbie to sign the medical power of attorney papers.

CHER
What? He doesn't want the drugs.

DOTTIE
Lie to him. That's what family's for. Think of something or he's gonna die. And your mother can't take that now.
(beat)
I'm going to get the car.

INT. ROBBIE'S HOSPICE ROOM - DAY

Phyllis pulls out a plastic Chanukah menorah from her bag and places it in the window. She screws in two orange, flame-shaped light bulbs and plugs the menorah in. It lights the window in an orange glow.

PHYLLIS
Wherever you go, you make a little Shabbos for yourself.

She looks into the room across the hall.

PHYLLIS'S POV OF THE ROOM ACROSS THE HALL - A BRIDE in full bridal gown and veil sits on the bed of her feeble ELDERLY FATHER, holding his hand, whispering and smiling. Next to her is her new GROOM.

INT. HOSPICE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The bride leaves the room. Someone taps her shoulder.

PHYLLIS
Excuse me.

INT. ROBBIE'S HOSPICE ROOM - DAY

Robbie sits up in bed, listless, with Cher beside him.

PHYLLIS

Yoo-hoo. Someone's here to see you.

A mound of white lace and taffeta peeks around the corner.

BRIDE

Are you Robbie?

Robbie sees the bride and lights up, a smile spreading across his face.

INT. HOSPICE HALLWAY - DAY

Phyllis swings herself out along the wall. She stands for a moment, numb. She won't break. Silent tears come.

Cher goes to her mother, haltingly, and puts her arms around her in a clunky, uncomfortable motion. Phyllis sobs and Cher holds her patting her back like a child.

CUT TO:

INT. ICU, ARNIE'S ROOM - 8PM

The family crowds around Arnie's bed; Samuel in silent prayer; Cher stands at the foot of her father's bed; Victoria in a wheelchair, glances nervously at Francie- who ignores her. A creaking sound as Phyllis pushes Robbie's wheelchair into the room. Phyllis tries to take her place next to Arnie at the head of the bed but Samuel won't budge. Phyllis physically squeezes herself in, pushing a scowling Samuel aside.

The only sounds in the room are the "shushing" of the ventilator and an insistent small "beep." Robbie's thumb moves in a circular, continuous pattern. Doctor Schwartz and Nurse Holloway are at the top of the bed.

Robbie chuckles.

ROBBIE

Sammy, remember when you hid acid in the fridge and Mom found it?

Samuel's prayer stops. Phyllis smiles her fake smile and clears her throat in embarrassment.

DR. SCHWARTZ

Ready?

Phyllis nods. Nurse Holloway takes the apparatus from Arnie's face and swabs the inside of the mask with alcohol doused cotton. She lets it dangle at the side of the bed.

NURSE HOLLOWAY
It will be few minutes now.

They all look up at the clock.

CLOSE ON THE CLOCK - The hands point at 8:15pm.

SWEEP ACROSS TO:

START FLASHBACK

EXT. SILVER HOUSE - MIDNIGHT - 1995

Scattered night lights as the house sleeps. On Francie's closed door a sign with her name and "DO NOT DISTURB."

INT. ARNIE AND PHYLLIS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Phyllis sleeps alone in bed.

INT. ARNIE AND PHYLLIS'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

IN THE DRESSING ROOM - A dresser drawer is carefully opened and a flashlight shines in on rolls of socks. The drawer opens further to reveal a hand gun.

SAMMY (O.S.)
(whispers)
See? I told you.

Sammy(now 16),Robbie(now 14), Cher(now 10) stand over the drawer, staring at the gun. Sammy reaches in.

ROBBIE
(whispers)
You better not!

In the BG the SOUND of the garage door going up. Sammy SLAMS the drawer and they scatter.

EXT. SILVER DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Arnie's car illuminates the garage door as it sticks half way up. Arnie gets out and we hear a muttered "goddammit!" as he struggles with the door.

INT. CHER AND VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cher hears the sound of her father's jingling change in his pockets as he comes down the hall. She feigns sleep.

The door cracks open and Arnie tiptoes into the room. He tucks Cher in and kisses her hair. Cher opens her eyes as he leave the room.

INT. SILVER KITCHEN - NIGHT

Arnie warms the food left for him on the stove. We hear a "damn!" as he burns himself.

INT. SILVER DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Arnie sits alone and eats. He feels something at his leg, smiles down, and rubs Panda's belly with his foot. The faucet runs in the kitchen.

ARNIE

Phyll?

ROBBIE (O.S.)

It's me.

ARNIE

I want to talk to you for a minute.

INT. SILVER HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cher peeks around the corner.

CHER'S POV OF DINING ROOM - Robbie sits at the table and half of Arnie's back can be seen.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Arnie stamps out his cigarette on his empty plate.

ARNIE

Have you been thinking about what you might like to do for a career someday?

ROBBIE

I've been thinking about being a nurse.

ARNIE

You know I always wanted to be a Doctor. Do you think you'd like that?

ROBBIE

No.

ARNIE

(losing patience)

It's a very respected profession. Much more so than nursing.

ROBBIE
I don't care.

INTERCUT - HALLWAY/DINING ROOM

Cher dances the Mr. Rabbit puppet from around the corner.

Robbie looks back at his father, trying not to laugh.

ARNIE
You know when I was young, Jews didn't
have the opportunities that you do.

ROBBIE
I know.

ARNIE
So don't go wasting it on being a
nurse!

ROBBIE
(a flare of defiance)
Mom did it! It wasn't a waste for her!

Arnie visibly swallows his frustration.

ARNIE
I want to tell you something about your
mother that you're old enough to hear.

Cher stops dancing, straining to hear.

Arnie leans in to Robbie, man to man.

ARNIE
Your mother's not well.

ROBBIE
(face goes pale)
Wh..what do you mean?

Arnie makes the cuckoo signal with his finger at his head.

ARNIE
Up here. There's something wrong with
her. She's mentally unbalanced.

ROBBIE
She is not!

Robbie stands up so violently that his chair tips over.

ROBBIE
She is not! She is NOT!

ARNIE
Don't you raise your voice to me!

ROBBIE
(yells)
I don't believe you!
(bursts into tears)
I don't believe you!!

INT. SILVER HALLWAY - NIGHT

Robbie races by Cher and SLAMS the bathroom door.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Arnie sighs and rubs his aching forehead. Panda jumps into his lap and Arnie strokes the cat.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cher lays on the carpet, puts her finger under the bathroom door and moves it around. Robbie keeps sobbing. Then his sobs catch as he's clearly seen Cher's finger. A small giggle from the bathroom. Cher smiles.

INT. ARNIE'S OFFICE - MORNING

A FRAMED PHOTO ON THE WALL shows eight smiling young men and their saxophones. A very young Arnie is one of them, beaming with pride.

In the BG, someone struggles to play the saxophone.

INT. SILVER LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Arnie plays his soprano sax to "I'll Be Seeing You" on radio. He hits a sour note.

ARNIE
Damn it.

PHYLLIS (O.S.)
Shoo! Shoo!

INT. SILVER DINING ROOM - MORNING

Phyllis has a long broom, trying to scare away a crow from the transom window above her.

PHYLLIS
Get away from there!

Arnie peeks around the corner and smiles at Phyllis and her crow. Phyllis sees him and shyly shoos him away with a flirtatious wave of her hand. He laughs and disappears.

INT. SILVER HOUSE, FRANCIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Francie(17) smokes a cigarette and sketches. She smiles at herself in the mirror, posing as if at a dinner party.

FRANCIE
(to her reflection)
Why, yes, thank you.

CLOSE UP OF DRAWING - A quite good rendition of a wedding ceremony. The bride looks like Francie. The groom's face is undrawn.

INT. SAMMY AND ROBBIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Sammy and Robbie work completely absorbed on a model airplane.

Cher and the Mr. Rabbit puppet slowly rise into view behind Sammy's head. Robbie smiles. Mr. Rabbit appears to be reading the directions over Sammy's shoulder.

INT. SILVER LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Arnie plays another bad note and angrily hits the saxophone bell against a metal chair back.

ARNIE
Idiot!

He looks at the bell of the sax. Dented. He's furious.

INT. SILVER DINING ROOM - MORNING

Phyllis is still chasing the crow which hasn't noticed her. Victoria appears with Phyllis's pearl necklace.

VICTORIA
Mommy, can I have this?

Arnie enters with saxophone in hand.

ARNIE
Enough already with the broom!

PHYLLIS
I don't want it up there pecking.

Phyllis waves her arms around.

ARNIE
What the hell do you care?!

INT. SAMMY AND ROBBIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

As the voices raise in the BG, Sammy suddenly whirls, grabbing Mr. Rabbit off of Cher's hand.

CHER
Give it back!

Sammy hurls Mr. Rabbit against the wall. He starts strangling the puppet. Cher screams in agony.

CHER
Stop it!

Arnie angrily looks into the room. Everyone freezes.

ARNIE
I want you boys to oil the garage door today! It's been sticking.

Cher grabs Mr. Rabbit and runs out crying.

ARNIE
And turn out this light! I'm not made of money!

Arnie strides by Phyllis and Victoria with his brief case.

PHYLLIS
That's right! Run away to work!

Arnie grabs a large serving platter on the sink and heaves it against the wall with a CRASH!

INT. SILVER HOUSE, FRANCIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Francie laughs into the mirror and rolls her eyes.

FRANCIE
Oh, I know. You just can't get good help.

INT. SILVER KITCHEN - MORNING

Victoria sways side to side behind Phyllis.

ARNIE
Don't you ever criticize me! I provide the roof over your goddamn head!

INT. CHER AND VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

A small desk is pushed across the floor as the YELLING continues in the BG.

CHER
 There's where you should go. You're
 better over there.
 (looks at the desk)
 That feels better, right?

A door SLAMS in the BG and the yelling stops.

INT. ARNIE AND PHYLLIS'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Phyllis cries face down on the bed.

ROBBIE
 Mom?
 (no answer)
 Mommy? Are you OK?

Robbie sits and pets Phyllis's back. Her sobs subside. He hands her a Kleenex and she blows into it and sighs deeply.

PHYLLIS
 (hugs him)
 You're going to grow into such a nice
 man someday.

INT. SILVER HOUSE - NIGHT

Calm in the sleeping house.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

The garage door sticks half way up. Arnie gets out and tries to pull it up but slips and falls on the ice.

INT. CHER AND VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cher puts the light out and hides under the covers. Arnie's jangling pocket change and firm stride doesn't break as he goes past her door.

INT. SAMMY AND ROBBIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The boys are jolted awake as the door BURSTS open and the light goes on. Arnie stands infuriated in the doorway.

ARNIE
 What did I tell you boys to do?

Sammy and Robbie, completely disoriented, don't answer.

ARNIE
What did I tell you to do?!

SAMMY
Oil the garage door.

ARNIE
Did you do it?
(no answer)
Did you do it?!

SAMMY
No.

Arnie is like an enraged bull. He stalks over to the newly finished model airplane and SMASHES it to the floor. Robbie SCREAMS and starts to cry. Sammy leaps to his feet, eyes flashing fury.

ARNIE
You'll damn well remember the next time
I tell you to do something!

Robbie runs out of the room. The bathroom door SLAMS. Sammy stands furious, almost as tall as Arnie.

ARNIE
You got something to say?!

SAMMY
Fuck you!

Arnie SLAPS Sammy across the face. Sammy raises his fist. Arnie's slaps rain down on him hard around him.

ARNIE
You want to be a big man? You get the
hell out and make your own living! Then
you can be a big man like me!

SAMMY
(warding off the blows)
I'll never be like you!

Arnie strides out. Sammy kneels and starts to pick up the shattered bits of the airplane.

INT. SILVER HALLWAY - NIGHT

Phyllis stands in her bedroom door with a disapproving frown.

EXT. SILVER HOUSE - MORNING

PHYLLIS (O.S.)
Arnie!

INT. ARNIE'S HOME OFFICE - MORNING

Phyllis runs in holding a note in her shaking hand.

PHYLLIS
Sammy's gone!

She grabs the phone and starts to dial.

ARNIE
He's sixteen. Let him grow up.

She puts down the phone and races from the room, sobbing. Arnie sighs and tries to refocus on his paperwork. Panda stares at him. He answers, defensive.

ARNIE
What.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - MORNING

Cher and Victoria trundle down the drive to the bus stop.

VICTORIA
Do you think Sammy will come back?

CHER
Yeah. Don't worry.

VICTORIA
I want his bathroom drawer.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Phyllis's car rolls up, the door opens and Panda is dropped out. The door SLAMS and the car drives away.

INT. SILVER KITCHEN - NIGHT

Arnie stands at the stove warming his food. He looks around waiting for the cat. No Panda.

INT. SILVER DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Arnie sits with his plate and looks under the table. Nothing.

INT. ARNIE AND PHYLLIS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Arnie slips into bed next to Phyllis.

ARNIE
Phyll. Phyll? Where's Panda?

PHYLLIS
(mumbles in her sleep)
I don't know. Maybe he ran away.

Arnie lays down worried and sad.

INT. ARNIE AND PHYLLIS'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Arnie excitedly shakes Phyllis awake.

ARNIE
Guess who's home!?

PHYLLIS
Sammy?!

Panda rubs himself around the corner and stops in his tracks, eyeing Phyllis. She covers her head with a pillow.

END FLASHBACK

CLOSE ON the clock. The hands point out 8:30pm. Fifteen minutes later. We are...

INT. ICU, ARNIE'S ROOM - NIGHT - PRESENT

The family stands in exactly the same positions.

NURSE HOLLOWAY
I don't understand. He's breathing.

The siblings and Phyllis exchange looks of mixed emotions. From outside in the hall, a PHONE RINGS.

SAMUEL
You see? God decides.

FRANCIE
Shut up, Samuel.

CHER
What do we do now?

PHYLLIS
Doctor?

DR. SCHWARTZ
Well... this is, uh... highly unusual.

NURSE #2
(head in the door)
Mrs. Silver? The phone is for you.

INT. ICU, NURSE'S DESK - NIGHT

Phyllis grasps the phone.

PHYLLIS
Hello?

INTERCUT - RABBI HERSHFELD'S OFFICE/NURSE'S DESK

Rabbi Hershfeld sits at his desk with an understanding look.

RABBI HERSHFELD
Phyllis. I'm so sorry for your loss. He was a good man.

PHYLLIS
Oh, Rabbi. *I'm* so sorry. He's still alive.

Rabbi Hershfeld is stunned. He sighs and begins to erase in his calendar.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL, FAMILY WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

The family sits in various positions throughout the room, exhausted. Victoria talks on her cell phone from her wheelchair. One leg hangs off the foot plate on the wheelchair and shakes.

VICTORIA
I don't know *why* he didn't, he just didn't. Norm. Will you just come pick me up? Fine. Bye.

Dr. Schwartz enters.

DR. SCHWARTZ
Well, he's breathing on his own. If he lasts more than a few hours, it presents a new issue. The part of the brain that governs some of the local nerve functions has been affected. Your father can't swallow. If we try to feed him by mouth he'll choke.

SAMUEL

What are the options?

DR. SCHWARTZ

Feeding tube. Inserted directly into his stomach. Of course he'll try to take it out so we'll have to restrain his hands.

PHYLLIS

(moaning)

This is *not* what he wanted.

DR. SCHWARTZ

Or don't feed him and let him die naturally.

SAMUEL

You mean starve him to death? This is natural?

Cher begins to fidget. As Samuel keeps talking, she looks as if she's on the edge, about to blow.

SAMUEL

What kind of man are you? This is a human being we're talking about! If he didn't die then it's what God wants!

CHER

(finally exploding)

What are you, some direct line? You don't know what God wants!

SAMUEL

I know it's not for us to say!

CHER

(standing)

You've certainly been having *your* say all over the place!

SAMUEL

You fly into town with *your* twisted lifestyle and have the nerve to tell me-

FRANCIE

Let him go, Samuel. You're only delaying the inevitable!

SAMUEL

(to Dr. Schwartz)
I will sue this hospital for every
penny if you don't feed him right
now...

(turns to Phyllis)
...and I will sue you if you let him die!
That's American law!

They all start squabbling at once. Phyllis gets up and walks out. Dr. Schwartz follows her. Everyone looks at each other.

CHER

Great.

She digs into her bag and shakily gets her Gameboy out.

SAMUEL

Is that all you can do? Act like a child?

CHER

Just cause you have a million children
doesn't make you MY father.

The rage surges into Samuel's face. He SMASHES the Gameboy against the wall and strides from the room.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Samuel angrily rushes out past Phyllis and Dr. Schwartz. Phyllis looks beaten.

PHYLLIS

I guess we'll do the feeding tube.

INT. HOSPITAL FAMILY WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Francie, Victoria and Robbie watch as Cher picks up the smashed orange plastic on the floor. Finally...

ROBBIE

I think he's mad.

Beat.

FRANCIE

I think he's a mad cow.

Another beat.

VICTORIA

Or a raging bull.

They wait for Cher to somehow be the glue... She gets up and walks out. The moment of camaraderie gone, Francie puts up an icy exterior. Victoria's face crumples.

FRANCIE
I'm going to get something to eat.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Cher sits at a table with a coffee and her pieces of orange Gameboy. Francie enters, gets coffee and goes to a different table to sit. Cher rolls her eyes and goes to her sister's table. They say nothing for a moment.

CHER
Do you think there's something wrong with us?

FRANCIE
Define "us."

CHER
Victoria said that-

FRANCIE
-That's Kurukulla.

CHER
What?

FRANCIE
Around your neck.

CHER
Oh. Yeah. Tibetan Goddess of war and independent thinking or something...

FRANCIE
Tibetan goddess of love.

CHER
No, she's supposed to govern all the fighting-

Francie examines the necklace and points it out to Cher.

FRANCIE
Kurukulla enchants gods and humans to serve and love her. See the lotus flower in one of her hands?

CHER
(looks down)
Yeah?

FRANCIE
And see the bow and arrow?

CHER
Yeah?

FRANCIE
And see the lotus position she's in?

CHER
Yeah.

FRANCIE
(shrugs)
It's Kurukulla.

Beat.

CHER
Really.

FRANCIE
Yeah. I thought everybody knew that.

CUT TO:

INT. SILVER DINING ROOM - DAY

Cher sits at the dining room table, dark circles under her eyes, holding a mug of coffee and looking at an old photo.

CLOSE ON PHOTO - Robbie and Cher as children, side by side holding hands and look seriously into the camera.

A TINGLING BELL fades up in the BG. As the sound gets louder, it's actually many bells playing the song "Greensleeves." Cher scrambles from the table.

INT. SILVER HALLWAY - DAY

Cher throws open the door, smiles and waves at the ice cream truck.

CHER'S POV OF ICE CREAM TRUCK - The DRIVER waves back. The truck recedes and the jingling melody gradually disappears.

AT THE DOOR - Cher stands alone, staring down the empty street. A car pulls into the driveway. Mugsy gets out.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Cher's eyes go wide. She runs over and hugs Mugsy.

CHER
Are you crazy?!

MUGSY
(thumbs to other side)
It's kinda going around.

Sybil gets out of the passenger side. Cher is flabbergasted. Sybil goes to her and hugs her. Cher silently holds on for dear life. Sybil and Mugsy exchange a glance.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Cars zoom by on the busy boulevard.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Mugsy, Sybil and Cher sit with coffee mugs.

CHER
Lisa had her baby!?

MUGSY
Last night. A bouncing baby boy.
Wendy's all proud, like *she* did it.

CHER
Were you there? In the room?

MUGSY
Yeah, that's right up there on the list with "hearing your parents have sex."
The only place I wanna see a baby is *in* the blanket.

CHER
So. They have their little family.

SYBIL
They? You don't get away so easily,
"Godmother."

MUGSY
We figured we should bring you home before the kid starts walking and talking and knocks over a liquor store-

SYBIL
Which won't be long with Mugsy around.

Cher doesn't laugh. Mugsy changes track.

MUGSY
How's Robbie?

CHER
(sighs)
He won't take the drugs. The only way
I'm gonna get him to sign over medical
power of attorney is if I trick him. So
now I have to lie.

MUGSY
Oh, fuck.

SYBIL
What does he say when you talk to him?

CHER
(shakes her head)
It's like my brother's gone missing.

Cher stops herself from tearing up as Sybil takes her hand.
Cher pulls away, in her own world.

CHER
You know how I spent my childhood?
Trapped and furious. Now...

MUGSY
You know what? You just gotta do the
right thing, here. Fuck everybody else.

INT. SILVER LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The sky is streaked with orange and fiery red as Dottie
reaches in and pours Phyllis and herself a large shot of
Vodka. Phyllis sips, then picks up the phone and dials.

DOTTIE
Who are you calling?

PHYLLIS
As Arnie would say, enough is enough.
I'm taking out the feeding tube.

INT. HOSPITAL FAMILY WAITING ROOM - EVENING

Francie listens on the phone, wiping tears away.

FRANCIE
What about Samuel?

INTERCUT - SILVER LIVING ROOM/FAMILY WAITING ROOM

PHYLLIS

It's not his decision. Okay, Dear. I
love you.

Phyllis waits, then sighs and hangs up.

PHYLLIS

Not neat. It can never be neat.
(beat)
Ahh, Dottie. Life is just a mess.

DOTTIE

Yeah. One big God-damned mess.

The two sit together drinking and watching the sunset.

INT. ICU, ARNIE'S ROOM - EVENING

Dr. Schwartz looks over Arnie's chart. Francie dozes with a book on her lap.

Arnie's hands are in cloth restraints and a milky substance pumps through a hanging tube that disappears under the sheets. The doctor reaches up and scrolls the wheel that turns off the food substance in the IV. Then he quietly opens the Velcro restraints.

Ron studies Francie's face and curiously leans over her.

CLOSE ON THE BOOK - The title reads: "The I-Ching-Book of Changes" An elaborate mish-mash of pencil lines has been drawn, but the words "creative-father" and "the gentle-first daughter" stand out.

Ron fixes the blanket around Francie. Suddenly she grabs his hand in her sleep, like a child. He stays and pets her hair lightly, gently watching over her.

INT. ROBBIE'S HOSPICE ROOM - EVENING

Cher sits next to Robbie's bed while Robbie sips milk from a milk carton with a straw. He speaks quietly.

CHER

You know this intimacy thing with the
family isn't so easy. I'm trying but...

ROBBIE

You know wearing a diaper is okay.

Cher goes still.

ROBBIE

If I want to go, I just go. I don't even have to get up. Like right now I'm going.

Cher looks at him and her ragged panicked breath starts again. Mugsy and Sybil walk in. Robbie looks at Mugsy with no recognition. She trips into the door, Chaplin-esque.

ROBBIE

(smiles)
Mugsy Kline.

MUGSY

At your service, Dr. Silver.

CHER

And this is Sybil.

Sybil sits next to Cher on the bed and Robbie smiles and takes her hand.

ROBBIE

About time.

INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Victoria, on the phone, wipes tears from her eyes. The orange light of the setting sun illuminates her room.

VICTORIA

Ok. Yeah. Mom? Can I come over?

INT. ROBBIE'S HOSPICE ROOM - EVENING

Cher holds a piece of paper on the table in front of Robbie, her thumb covering the heading on the page.

CHER

This is a meals agreement for while you're here.

ROBBIE

The food's good.

CHER

(fighting back tears)
See? You already agree with the meals.

The joke falls onto empty air as Robbie tries to sign. His signature is unreadable and goes off the line. Cher reaches down and steadies his hand and the words "Medical Power of Attorney" are suddenly visible at the top.

Cher picks up the next sheet labeled "Financial Power of Attorney" and puts it down in front of Robbie, covering the heading again.

CHER
This is a back up copy.

She watches his slow signature and she seems more and more agitated, fighting a breakdown. Sybil squeezes her shoulder.

INT. ICU, NURSE'S STATION - NIGHT

Samuel stops at the nurse's desk.

SAMUEL
How's he been tonight?

ICU NURSE
About the same.

Samuel makes his way down the hall toward his father's room.

INT. ROBBIE'S HOSPICE ROOM - NIGHT

Cher is on the phone and Sybil sits on the bed with Robbie.

SYBIL
You know what I'm thinking?

ROBBIE
That my sister's a pain in the ass?

SYBIL
Yeah. And it runs in the family.

He grins.

CHER
(voice low in the phone)
So what do you think, Wen?

INT. CEDARS SINAI HOSPITAL - LOS ANGELES - EVENING

Wendy, on the phone, in doctor's coat with stethoscope around her neck, signs papers while she talks.

WENDY
It's bad, Cher. I told him about the new drugs available but it sounds like Robbie's had some brain atrophy. I hope it's not too late. If he'll even take them.

INT. ROBBIE'S HOSPICE ROOM - NIGHT

Mugsy moves to the window and screws in another orange flame-shaped light bulb into the menorah.

SYBIL

You guys are smart. But you're all in your heads too much, ya know?

ROBBIE

Yeah.

SYBIL

(touches his heart)
Where's this?

ROBBIE

Do you think I should take the drugs?

SYBIL

Yeah, I do.

ROBBIE

Okay. I will.

Cher stops, incredulous, and just stares at Sybil.

INT. ICU, ARNIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Samuel sits next to Arnie's bed and closes his prayer book. He takes Arnie's hand and realizes that it's NOT in restraints. He suddenly moves the sheets, looking for feeding apparatus. There is none.

INT. ICU, NURSE'S STATION - NIGHT

Samuel races to the desk.

SAMUEL

Where's the feeding tube?!!

ICU NURSE

It was removed. The Doctor ordered it.

SAMUEL

On whose authority?!

INT. HOSPITAL, FAMILY WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Francie sleeps on the couch under a blanket as Samuel BURSTS in and rips the cover off of her. She rises to meet him.

SAMUEL
Murderer!

FRANCIE
LET HIM GO! Your guilt won't fix it.

Samuel draws back as if to hit Francie. She doesn't flinch.

FRANCIE
I dare you.

He backs down in fear, then runs out.

INT. ICU, ARNIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Samuel's hand plunges into a pitcher of ice water. He holds a piece of ice to Arnie's lips. As the ice dribbles onto his lips and into his mouth Samuel leans closer. His eyes widen.

CUT TO:

INT. PHYLLIS'S CAR - NIGHT

Cher, Mugsy and Sybil drive in silence.

MUGSY
Who knew? All she did was ask.

Sybil starts to giggle. Then laughs out loud.

EXT. KLINE HOUSE - NIGHT

Cher's car pulls up. Mugsy gets out and goes to the house.

SYBIL
Are you ok?

Cher shrugs.

SYBIL
What.

CHER
(bursts)
It's all so easy for you!
(mimics)
Cher, you have to open up, Cher, say I love you, Robbie take some drugs... I'm not a fucking puppet!

SYBIL
I know-

CHER

And I didn't ask for your help, I don't need your help! And Kurukulla was the goddess of love, so you lied to me!

SYBIL

Ok I lied! About a charm. So?

CHER

So it's my garden and you're stomping through it picking all the flowers! No wonder I haven't said I love you!

Sybil is stopped.

SYBIL

You owe me an apology.

She SLAMS the car door on her way out.

INT. PHYLLIS'S CAR - NIGHT

Cher drives angrily through the closed storefronts. She feels for the Kurukulla at her neck.

INT. SILVER KITCHEN - NIGHT

Phyllis and Victoria look at a Neiman-Marcus catalogue over salads. Suddenly Samuel bursts in, his face red with fury. He grabs the plates from the table and flings them CRASHING against the wall.

SAMUEL

Enjoy your meal while your husband starves to death!

VICTORIA

Samuel, you-

SAMUEL

You call yourself a wife?

PHYLLIS

(rises)

I know what your father wants and it's not a slow death with no dignity!

Samuel pushes Phyllis roughly against the wall.

VICTORIA

(screams)

Stop it! Just stop it!!

INT. SILVER HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cher comes through the door.

CHER'S POV OF THE KITCHEN - Samuel pins Phyllis against the wall while Victoria SCREAMS, trying to pull him away. Cher barrels down the hall.

SECONDS LATER - Cher YELLS above the din.

CHER (O.S.)

CUT!

They all STOP. Cher has Arnie's GUN trained on her brother.

CHER

I mean STOP.

Samuel releases Phyllis. All are breathing hard.

PHYLLIS

(to Cher)

Are you crazy?!

CHER

Me!?

SAMUEL

He can swallow!

PHYLLIS/CHER

What?

SAMUEL

I was there. They said he couldn't but Dad swallowed. He can eat. And you're no better than butchers! All of you!

He stomps out of the house, SLAMMING the door behind him. Cher's hand starts to shake as she lowers the gun.

PHYLLIS

What were you thinking?! A gun?

CHER

Mother. The safety's on. I don't even know how to-

The gun FIRES into the floor and they all SCREAM.

PHYLLIS

Oh my God!

(drops to her knees, moans)

Ohh, my good tile.

Cher puts the gun down gingerly and helps her mother clean up the broken glass. Victoria leans over to help.

VICTORIA

Shit!

PHYLLIS

I know, what a mess-

VICTORIA

(doubled over in pain)

Ohhhh...

INT. BEAUMONT HOSPITAL, EMERGENCY - NIGHT

The doors burst open and Victoria, moaning in pain, is wheeled in by Norm, flanked by Phyllis and Cher.

PHYLLIS

(to anyone)

Emergency!! She's premature!

INT. VICTORIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Victoria lies writhing in pain in bed while Phyllis massages her lower back. Norm watches the Animal Planet on TV.

PHYLLIS

Cher, get me a cold cloth.

INT. VICTORIA'S HOSPITAL BATHROOM - NIGHT

Cher grabs a washcloth and turns on the faucet. Her reflection in the mirror shows a near panic attack.

INT. VICTORIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Phyllis takes the cloth from Cher.

PHYLLIS

You don't look so good. Go get some air. Don't disappear, I need you.

Cher passes a NURSE entering the room as she leaves.

VICTORIA (O.S.)

Please. Gimme drugs! Gimme something!

OB NURSE (O.S.)

Oh, Honey. This ain't nothin' yet.

INT. HOSPITAL RESTROOM - NIGHT

Cher BURSTS in and stands at the sink, holding on for dear life. She splashes her face with cold water and grabs some paper towels, but the dispenser sticks. Cher PULLS at the dispenser and it's suddenly all too much.

CHER
 God dammit!
 (pounds the dispenser)
 Fuckin' GIVE ME A FUCKING BREAK!

A toilet FLUSHES and A NUN in white habit comes out of a stall. She doesn't meet Cher's eyes as they stand at the sinks together.

INT. ICU, ARNIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Samuel sits next to a barely conscious Arnie, feeding him clear broth from a spoon.

INT. HOSPITAL, FAMILY WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Francie sits at the table with a cup of tea and tarot cards. Phyllis enters, exhausted.

PHYLLIS
 I want to talk to you.

FRANCIE
 I'm busy, Mother.

PHYLLIS
 You have to talk to Victoria.

FRANCIE
 I don't want to discuss-

PHYLLIS
 You are going to listen to me!

INT. ICU, ARNIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nurse Holloway comes in and takes Arnie's pulse.

SAMUEL
 You know, my father has done the right thing his whole life.

NURSE HOLLOWAY
 I'll bet you were proud of him.

SAMUEL
 (glares at her)
Am proud of him. You take care of your
 family. It's a commitment to God.

INT. HOSPITAL FAMILY WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Phyllis is losing patience.

PHYLLIS
 What happened was not Victoria's fault,
 it was your father's.

FRANCIE
 Blame the one who can't talk back-

PHYLLIS
 He put you both in a bad position!

Francie is quiet. Then she turns, eyes flaring.

FRANCIE
 She was in MY chair. It was MY desk.
 And he told me to pull up the
 secretary's chair and help her, like I
 was the assistant!

PHYLLIS
 And she was your younger sister.

FRANCIE
 And she sat there so smug I could've
 killed her-

PHYLLIS
 Stop this! You're a child-talking about
 children's hurts while your sister's in
 real danger. If something happens to
 her it'll be too late. Now we are going
 to start acting like a family, or I
 will break somebody's goddamned neck!

Both of them stop, shocked at Phyllis's authoritative tone.
 Francie turns back to her Tarot.

CLOSE ON ONE TAROT CARD - "The Fool" WINKS HIS EYE at
 Francie as he skips over the cliff edge.

FRANCIE EXPLODES out of her chair. She looks again at the
 card, closer. It's just a card.

Samuel appears sullenly in the doorway.

PHYLLIS
 (snaps at Samuel)
 Robbie's all alone at the hospice. I
 want you to go be with him.

Samuel looks away as Phyllis brushes past him and out.
 Beat. Finally Francie tsks in disgust.

FRANCIE
 I'll go.

INT. VICTORIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - 2AM

Victoria SCREAMS with pain, clamping on to the nurse's hand. Cher cools Victoria's head with a cold cloth as Phyllis massages her back. Norm sleeps in a chair in the corner as Phyllis's distress grows.

PHYLLIS
 Oh God. It will be over soon. I
 promise. We'll go shopping, we'll-

The nurse lets go of Victoria's hand-Victoria SCREAMS.

VICTORIA
 Get back here!!

The nurse takes Victoria's blood pressure.

OB NURSE
 We'd better get them outta there.

Phyllis gets up and goes to Norm. She kicks the chair and slaps his head.

PHYLLIS
 Get your goddamn butt up and help!!

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - 2AM

Victoria moans all the way down the hall.

VICTORIA'S POV FROM THE GURNEY - Norm's concerned look...
 the nurse pushes the gurney from the end...Samuel suddenly
 appears on her right.

SAMUEL
 Victoria, this is Sol Lipschitz, the
 mohel.

A VERY ORTHODOX JEWISH MAN with glasses and scraggly black
 beard takes Samuel's place, keeping up with the fast pace.

SOL LIPSCHITZ

Victoria, it's very important that your sons are circumcised by an orthodox mohel or they won't be truly Jewish. I would be happy to perform the-

VICTORIA

AGGHHHHHH!

All goes white and fades out...

SERIES OF SHOTS - ECHOED SOUNDS OF THE BIRTH

FRANCIE sleeps in the chair in Robbie's room.

ROBBIE lays listlessly in bed. He turns and sees the electric menorah in the window. He smiles weakly.

SAMUEL prays in the maternity ward waiting room as Norm paces.

SYBIL slowly packs her suitcase. She looks at the phone.

CHER rests her chin in her hands, balancing elbows on knees, looking at Arnie. She tentatively takes his limp hand in hers.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. HOSPITAL - SUNRISE

Over the fiery sunrise we hear a whispered HEBREW prayer.

PHYLLIS(O.S.)

Shemah Yisroel..adonai eloheynu, adonai echad.

INT. ICU, ARNIE'S ROOM - SUNRISE

Phyllis holds Arnie's hand. Cher awakens in the chair across from her and watches her mother.

Something distracts Phyllis, although Cher has heard no sound. Phyllis shivers, drops Arnie's hand, then looks expectantly at the doorway.

The nurse's phone RINGS and the muffled voice of the O.C. nurse answers. She appears in the door.

NURSE HOLLOWAY

Mrs. Silver? Your son just phoned from upstairs. You have two new grandsons and your daughter's doing fine.

Phyllis smiles. She breathes a long sigh of relief.

CHER
(studying her mother)
You already knew, didn't you?

PHYLLIS
Cher, refill the pitcher, will you?

Phyllis seems very calm as Cher leaves.

PHYLLIS
(to Arnie)
Did you hear that? Two healthy
grandsons and Victoria's fine.

EXT. ICU HALLWAY- MORNING

Cher flattens against the wall outside the door and listens.

INT. ICU, ARNIE'S ROOM - MORNING

Arnie's eyelids flutter slightly. His eyes open and he stares at Phyllis. Phyllis is still holding his hand. He smiles faintly.

PHYLLIS
So. We're going to be fine. Everything
will be as it's meant to be. Go.

EXT. ICU HALLWAY, MORNING

Cher trembles, bites her lip and furiously blinks back tears. She grabs the chair in the hallway to rearrange its position. The chair won't budge. Cher pulls harder. Nothing. She looks.

THE FEET OF THE CHAIR are bolted to the floor.

Cher wildly pitches around trying to find some piece of furniture not nailed down. They all are. She grabs the pay phone as if it's the only life line she's ever known.

INT. ICU, ARNIE'S ROOM - MORNING

Phyllis holds Arnie's hand and smooths his thin white hair. Arnie blinks slowly. A tear slides down his cheek. She starts to hum. The hum turns into a very low croon...

PHYLLIS
(sings softly)
Did I remember to tell you I adore
you...

INT. KLINE HOUSE - BLOOMFIELD HILLS - MORNING

Sybil answers her cell phone.

SYBIL

Cher?

INTERCUT - INT. HOSPITAL HALL/KLINE HOUSE - MORNING

CHER

(trying to keep it together)
Ok. Ok. You know how you walk between
two parked cars, and you don't know if
they could roll and cut your legs off-

SYBIL

What happened?

CHER

I can't do this I can't watch people
die I can't feel this I don't want to I-

SYBIL

Cher. You're strong. You're brave.

Cher's knees buckle and she slides down the wall to the
floor, still on the phone, crying and gulping for breath.

CHER

I'm not. I never learned this, he taught me
balancing my checkbook I can't do this-

SYBIL

It's okay. You can. I'm here, you're not
alone. Let me help, Cher-
(a CLICK sound)
Cher?

Cher leans against the wall, her breaths breaking into a sob,
then into choking sobs. Her cell phone vibrates and is
ignored.

INT. ICU, ARNIE'S ROOM - MORNING

Phyllis sings to Arnie as his eyes close. The sound of the
heart monitor goes to one long flat tone.

The EIGHTIES HOME MOVIE reappears as Phyllis sings (V.O.)

The children all dance around a young Phyllis in a rare
moment of family joy. Phyllis waves at the CAMERA then the
children wave and the picture slowly fades to BLACK.

INT. HOSPITAL, FAMILY WAITING ROOM - MORNING

Francie sleeps in a chair. A HAND pets her hair and she looks up to see a younger, healthier Arnie looking down lovingly. She smiles up and... he slowly fades.

INT. ICU, ARNIE'S ROOM - MORNING

Nurse Holloway turns off the monitor and the silence is deafening. Phyllis inhales a huge breath and exhales as if finally letting go. She smiles a real smile at Arnie.

SAMUEL

(rushes in excitedly)

Mom! You should see how tiny they-

Nurse Holloway puts her finger up and shakes her head. Samuel stops in his tracks, realization flooding over him.

He bursts into tears and throws himself across his father's bed. He stands, sputters a prayer in Hebrew and with great ceremony, takes off his coat and rips his white shirt.

Still speaking Hebrew in cadence he moves to Phyllis. He grabs at her lapel to rip it but she fends him off.

PHYLLIS

Are you crazy? This is a five hundred dollar blouse!

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL, NURSERY - MORNING

A small placard reading "SILVER-GOLDMAN" is on the base of two incubators head to head with two tiny PREMIE BABIES.

INT. VICTORIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Victoria lies in bed, feels her belly no longer full. A small knock at the door reveals Francie. Victoria wipes her eyes as Francie sits down. Silence. Francie is formal, uncomfortable.

FRANCIE

How are you?

VICTORIA

I've been better.

FRANCIE

I saw the babies. Cute.

VICTORIA
 (trying for the family game)
 How about those tanning booths.

FRANCIE
 Dad's gone.

BEAT.

VICTORIA
 Yeah.

FRANCIE
 He said goodbye to me.

They sit and say nothing, both alone in the room.

INT. HOSPITAL FAMILY WAITING ROOM - MORNING

Cher sleeps fitfully in a chair. A HAND brushes her cheek. Her eyes open and she looks at Sybil like a grateful child. Sybil folds her in her arms. Mugsy enfolds both of them and the three stay there.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SILVER DINING ROOM - EVENING

Dottie and Irv sit with Phyllis and Cher at the dining room table. Cher watches her mother carefully. Phyllis seems in a daze. Dottie has the situation firmly in hand.

DOTTIE
 Alright, you'll need chairs for the shiva.
 (looks around, figuring)
 ...about twenty.

PHYLLIS
 Twenty-five.

INT. SILVER KITCHEN - EVENING

Francie, eyes red and swollen, washes dishes with a vengeance.

DOTTIE (O.S.)
 Twenty folding chairs then. And we'll bring our prayer books for the service.

INT. SILVER DINING ROOM - EVENING

Cher takes Phyllis's hand.

CHER
Mom, you want something to drink?
Water?

Phyllis just shakes her head "no."

DOTTIE
Do you have ice?

PHYLLIS
You know when Arnie and I were first
married I was crossing the street and a
car just nicked me in the heel. I did a
somersault right there and landed in
the middle of the street.

INT. SILVER KITCHEN - EVENING

Francie stops doing the dishes and listens.

INT. SILVER DINING ROOM - EVENING

Dottie and Irv glance at each other.

PHYLLIS
I was really shaken up. I called Arnie
at work. He said "Are you alright? Then
what are you calling me for? I've got
work to do."
(shakes her head)
We were just married.

The freezer drawer opens and BANGS shut from the kitchen.

FRANCIE (O.S.)
She's got ice!

DOTTIE
We'll get a deli tray from A&P. Lillian
and Shirley will want to go in on-

PHYLLIS
I don't have ice.

Dottie sighs and disappears into the kitchen. The freezer
drawer opens again.

DOTTIE (O.S.)
Phyll, you got plenty of ice.

INT. SILVER KITCHEN - EVENING

Phyllis barrels in. Dottie flinches at the force coming at
her. Phyllis seems taller.

PHYLLIS
No! I can't serve this ice.

DOTTIE
Why not?

PHYLLIS
It's ugly.

Phyllis digs her hand in and pulls out a handful of cubes.

DOTTIE
Alright. Okay. We'll get new ice.
(writing)
"Pretty" ice.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. SILVER DINING ROOM - EVENING

Rabbi Hershfeld and Samuel have joined the group at the table. The Rabbi has a pen and pad out, making notes.

RABBI HERSHFELD
Tell me more about Arnie.

The siblings glare at each other, animosity thick.

RABBI HERSHFELD
(to Phyllis)
What kind of man was he? What kind of husband?

From the kitchen, they hear Dottie's ironic chuckle before she walks out the sliding side door.

RABBI HERSHFELD
(prompting)
Was he a loving husband?

PHYLLIS
Not particularly.

RABBI HERSHFELD
(shifts in his seat)
But he was a kind father?

PHYLLIS
Not really.

SAMUEL
What she means is that my father worked to provide for his family.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

He was a very responsible man. We grew close in the last couple of years.

FRANCIE

The last couple of years he was a vegetable.

PHYLLIS

Francie!

The argument continues around the bewildered Rabbi.

EXT. ROSE LAWN CEMETERY - MORNING

A cold, grey December morning. A shiny black hearse pulls in through the cemetery gates followed by two black limos and a long line of cars with orange funeral flags on their hoods.

EXT. CHAPEL - MORNING

Everything looks grey in this light.

INT. CHAPEL - MORNING

Robbie slowly walks down the aisle, Cher at his side. Each step seems to take an eternity. Cher glances down, unable to meet the curious gazes of everyone watching.

CHER

(whispers to Robbie)

Your shoe's untied.

(he stops and grins at her)

Don't stop! Jeez won't get there till Easter.

Robbie chuckles and keeps slowly walking. They finally get to the front row and sit down. The rest of the family join them. Cher looks around.

CHER'S POV OF CONGREGATION BEHIND HER - Dottie winks at her. In the back are a couple rows of ultra orthodox JEWISH MEN in black hats, beards and black coats. Directly across the aisle from them are Mugsy, Sybil, and Wendy.

Sybil smiles and puts her hand up in silent greeting. Cher shyly puts her hand up in response.

Rabbi Hershfeld steps up to the podium.

RABBI HERSHFELD

Good morning. Today we say good bye to a long-time member of our community. Arnold Solomon Silver.

RABBI HERSHFELD (CONT'D)
 But before I begin my comments, Shmuel
 Silver, his son, would like to say a
 few words.

Samuel steps up to the podium.

SAMUEL
 My father used to tell me how he took
 over his father's business after his
 death and paid back every penny of debt
 even though the loans, at that point,
 were null and void. He was proud of
 what he built even though he had to
 give up his dream of being a doctor to
 do it.

THE SILVER FAMILY ROW - crossed and shaking legs.

SAMUEL
 He taught me what it means to be proud
 of who you are. To be a kind, loving,
 decent human being. His patience and
 laughter are the things that I'll take
 with me throughout my life.

Dottie looks at Irv in confusion. "Arnie?" Irv shrugs.

SILVER FAMILY ROW - Robbie taps a rhythm into his thigh
 with his thumb and smiles.

SAMUEL (O.S.)
 How does a son say good bye to his
 father?

ROBBIE
 I'm glad he's dead. I hate him.

A small ripple of murmuring moves through the congregation.

EXT. GRAVE SITE - MORNING

The coffin slowly lowers into the ground as the CANTOR
 SINGS a haunting MELODY in Hebrew. Under a large green
 canopy, the congregation sits on wooden folding chairs as
 the Rabbi finishes the prayer.

RABBI HERSHFELD
 Arnold Solomon Silver from the dust you
 came and to the dust we return you.

Francie sobs. Robbie, in his wheelchair, looks around like
 a kid. Cher, holds Phyllis's gloved hand, and finds Sybil's
 eyes. Victoria wipes her eyes.

EXT. EDGE OF CEMETERY - MORNING

Samuel, bundled in scarf and hat, stands behind the cemetery fence, watching the proceedings from a distance.

EXT. GRAVE SITE - MORNING

The Rabbi takes a handful of dirt and throws it into the grave. Phyllis gets up and one by one, Cher, Francie and Victoria follow her, throwing dirt into the open grave. As Phyllis tosses the dirt a small JINGLE and a flash of light catches something at her wrist.

ON HER WRIST - A gold bracelet with a heart shaped charm.

Cher sees Phyllis touch the bracelet with a far-away look.

SWEEP ACROSS TO:

START FLASHBACK

INT. SILVER HOUSE, CHER AND VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - 1995

Cher sleeps. The sound of JAZZ MUSIC slowly wafts in and wakes her.

INT. SILVER HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cher sneaks toward the living room, peeks in.

INT. SILVER LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Arnie and Phyllis slow dance to DID I REMEMBER. The lyrics waft out: "Did I remember to tell you I adore you?" He dips her and she laughs a girlish laugh. He leans in and gently kisses her lips. A gold bracelet with a heart shaped charm catches the light, dangles from Phyllis's wrist.

INT. SILVER HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cher spies, smiling, as the jazz music plays on...

END FLASHBACK

EXT. GRAVE SITE - DAY - PRESENT

The group of orthodox men in coats and hats move forward and start shoveling dirt into the grave. Irv whispers to Dottie.

IRV
Where's Samuel?

Dottie nods at the small black figure at the fence.

DOTTIE
Not an orthodox cemetery.

IRV
What are *they* doing here?

DOTTIE
Representing him. But they're not supposed to be doing *that*.

Phyllis gets a look of fury as the men keep shoveling. She hisses to Cher.

PHYLLIS
I don't want that grave filled completely in. I said no orthodox ceremony! You tell Rabbi Hershfeld to stop them right now! If your father were here he'd be furious!

Cher stands up and sidles over to Rabbi Hershfeld who looks uncomfortable.

CHER
Rabbi, my mother spoke to you...

RABBI HERSHFELD
(to the diggers)
Thank you gentlemen that will be enough.

They ignore him and keep shoveling. The Rabbi smiles, embarrassed, ineffectual.

CHER
Really? Can you please stop them?

RABBI HERSHFELD
Alright. Thank you.

They keep shoveling.

CHER
Just...
(loses her temper)
My father was NOT a good Jew!

The entire congregation stares at Cher. She shifts uncomfortably.

CHER
Well, he wasn't really. He was proud of being Jewish, of course...

CHER (CONT'D)

Even though we joined a non-Jewish country club, and lived in a non Jewish neighborhood. He worked hard...as a matter of fact he thought if you were laughing you weren't working hard enough.

The congregation gape at Cher and her horrible eulogy. Dottie holds her head with the impending train wreck.

Phyllis is furious as she watches the diggers continue.

Cher makes a decision and moves towards the shoveling Jews.

CHER

My father didn't show emotion much. As a matter of fact I have no idea who he was and what he really felt.

Cher reaches the diggers and grabs the lead man's shovel.

CHER

But I know who he wasn't.

A small tug of war ensues but Cher's face is hard as nails. Finally the man gives in. They stop shoveling. Cher returns to her seat with the shovel and hands it to Phyllis, who accepts it with pride.

EXT. CHAPEL - DAY

Cher is in a group hug with Mugsy, Sybil and Wendy.

CHER

Where's the baby?

WENDY

Home with Mama.

MUGSY

They thought a birth and a funeral in the same week might make him think: "Why bother?"

They break their sloppy hug. Cher and Sybil look at each other, holding hands.

In the BG, Phyllis, looks over. Her brows furrow.

CHER

I'm sorry.

SYBIL

It's ok. This is hard stuff.

PHYLLIS (O.S.)

Cher?

Cher breaks instantly, pushing Sybil away so suddenly she almost goes down.

CHER

Mom! These are my friends.

PHYLLIS

(hugs Mugsy)

Oh, Margaret! Did you fly all the way from California?

MUGSY

I'm so sorry, Mrs. S.

PHYLLIS

Thank you. It's good to see you again.

CHER

And this is Wendy.

Phyllis shakes Wendy's hand.

WENDY

I'm sorry for your loss.

PHYLLIS

Are you the doctor?

WENDY

Yes.

PHYLLIS

Thank you for what you did for my son.
He just started the drugs. The hospice doesn't know about it of course.

There is an awkward pause. Sybil clears her throat.

CHER

Oh. And this is Sybil.

PHYLLIS

(shakes Sybil's hand)

Cher hasn't mentioned you.

SYBIL

Cher's got so many people in her life,
it's hard to keep them all *straight*.

CHER

We should go home now.

PHYLLIS

Thank you all for coming. Will you be at the house?

MUGSY

Actually we're heading to the airport.

PHYLLIS

It was good to see you, Margaret. Tell your parents hello.

(to Cher)

Don't be too long, Cher.

Phyllis walks away. Cher sighs a huge sigh of relief, until she looks at Sybil's face.

EXT. CHAPEL - MOMENTS LATER

Mugsy smokes furiously, huddled with Wendy.

MUGSY

Oh. She's kicking dirt. That's bad.

EXT. CHAPEL, UP THE HILL - DAY

Up the hill, Cher and Sybil argue. Cher digs her toe in the dirt, looking like a naughty child.

SYBIL

I wasn't even a friend! Just standing there like an idiot!

CHER

I got flustered! I didn't even know-

SYBIL

Cher. Maybe you really truly don't want to be in a relationship with me. All the pushing away, the obfuscating, the crap you make people slog through so they don't get close! It's got to be exhausting!

CHER

Wait, I-

SYBIL

You were right. You don't need me.

CHER

It's just ...my family's so screwed up-

SYBIL

Your family's right in front of you. You're just too dumb to open your eyes.

INT. LIMO - DAY

Cher sits in the back of the limo with Francie, Robbie, Victoria and Norm. Silence.

VICTORIA

Norm, go help my mother to the car.

Norm scowls, but a look from Victoria and he goes. Cher watches as her friends get into a cab. Sybil is the last one in. She doesn't look back. Cher's eyes fill as the cab goes.

ROBBIE

(to Francie)

How's your new apartment?

(sarcastic)

Or is that too personal?

Robbie laughs at his own joke, Victoria smiles.

FRANCIE

You think I just ran away don't you?

Cher wipes her tears and takes on her usual game persona.

CHER

She couldn't stand the heat.

VICTORIA

Got out of the kitchen.

ROBBIE

Without her fricaseed chicken-

They all snicker.

FRANCIE

Well, you try being the favorite when your father treats everyone else like shit!

Robbie, Cher and Victoria trade nervous glances.

CHER

We were just kidding, Fran.

FRANCIE

(about to break)

It's not funny. Do you know how much pressure it is to feel guilty because you're so adored?

CHER/ROBBIE/VICTORIA

No.

Dottie leans into the limo.

DOTTIE
 Goddamn that Rabbi. The shortest sermon
 known to man.
 (notices the mood)
 What. What happened?

INT. SILVER LIVING ROOM - DAY

PEOPLE sit or stand, filling the room. Silver family members are peppered throughout.

Dr. Ron Schwartz holds Francie's hand and comforts her.

AT THE COUCH - A few orthodox Jewish CHILDREN chase each other past Robbie in his wheelchair.

ROBBIE
 Hey!

Two of the YOUNGER GIRLS stop.

ROBBIE
 Do you know who I am?
 (they shake their heads "no.")
 I'm your Uncle Robbie.

Robbie holds out his hand for a handshake. The older of the girls is about to shake his hand...

SAMUEL
 Kids! Go help in the kitchen.
 (to Robbie)
 Are they bothering you?

ROBBIE
 No.

The girls scamper off. Samuel stands, uncomfortable.

SAMUEL
 I'm sorry I haven't come to visit you
 in the hospice. I've been busy.
 (looks away)
 I better see what those kids are into.

He walks away.

ROBBIE
 Putz.

Francie's hand on his shoulder brings him around.

FRANCIE
I have a professional question.

ROBBIE
Shoot.

FRANCIE
If someone starts to see things, does that mean they're crazy?

ROBBIE
Sometimes. But the true definition of insanity is to continue to do the same thing and expect a different result.

Francie frowns at the answer.

A FEW FEET AWAY - Victoria and Norm stand together. She sits down heavily on an ottoman and takes off her shoes, rubbing her feet.

VICTORIA
Why did I wear these?

NORM
They match the dress.

VICTORIA
Tsk. Oh yeah.

Cher looks at her mother surrounded by people, and realizes Phyllis is smiling that smile.

ARNIE'S SAXOPHONE rests on top of the piano. Cher lifts the sax and runs her hands over the gold metal. She turns it and notices the dent in the bell. She shakes her head.

SAMUEL
He loved that thing.

CHER
(shows him the damage)
Look what he did to it.

SAMUEL
It still made beautiful music.

CHER
You just can't tell yourself the truth.

SAMUEL
I've held this family together.

CHER

Our father's anger held this family together. And yours has pulled it apart.

SAMUEL

I protected his right to die as a Jew. As a valued human being.

CHER

Such a good Jew. What about your gay brother?

Samuel walks away. Cher looks around at the state of her family...

CHER'S POV OF HER SIBLINGS

Samuel prays with other orthodox men. Francie sits by herself, reading a prayer book. Robbie sits in his wheelchair, alone, staring at nothing. Victoria has opened the glass cabinet of mementos and inspects a Chinese ivory carving. She turns it over trying to ascertain the value.

INT. SILVER BATHROOM - DAY

Cher gets up from the john and pulls her pants up. As she leans over to flush, something PLUNKS into the water.

CLOSE ON TOILET BOWL - The little Kurukulla sits at the bottom of the bowl smiling up through the pee.

Cher is aghast. She goes to flush but stops. She can't do it. A huge sigh as she rolls up her shirtsleeve, and plunges her hand into the bowl.

INT. SILVER KITCHEN - 2AM

The kitchen is clean, bare, you'd hardly know there had been a change in this house.

INT. SILVER DINING ROOM - 2AM

Cher and Phyllis sit in their pajamas in silence both sipping tea and eating Oreos. Cher's Kurukulla charm hangs from her neck outside her pajamas. She twists the two halves of the Oreo apart and scrapes the white filling off with her teeth.

PHYLLIS

Is that how you do it?

CHER

What.

PHYLLIS
You unscrew it?

CHER
Yeah. How do you do it?

Phyllis brings her tea to the chair next to Cher.

PHYLLIS
Let me see this.
(she unscrews her halves)
Like that. Then what?

CHER
Eat the white part.

Phyllis scrapes off the white with her teeth. She tastes it and makes a face, then shrugs, maybe it's not so bad.

PHYLLIS
I guess I have a lot to learn.

CHER
(clears her throat)
Um. While we're on that subject-

PHYLLIS
The Rabbi did a nice eulogy, don't you think?

CHER
Yeah. I guess. Um. There's something I-

PHYLLIS
I hated his tie, though.

They eat Oreos in silence. Cher seems to be fighting with herself over something. Finally...

CHER
Ok. Mom, if we keep doing this I'll actually never say what I need to and I'll go back to California and that will be us forever. The Rabbi's ugly tie-

PHYLLIS
This is about Sybil.

Cher chokes.

PHYLLIS
Cherilyn. You want intimacy. So. Go.

CHER
(wipes her palms on her p.j's)
Um. You probably already know this but
Sybil is someone I've been... dating.

Cher waits for the bomb to drop. Silence. Her leg starts
bouncing under the table.

PHYLLIS
Do you love her?

CHER
(exhales and realizes...)
Yes. A lot.

Long pause.

PHYLLIS
Is she Jewish?

CHER
Yes.

PHYLLIS
What does her family do?

CHER
Mom, you're freakin' me out!

PHYLLIS
I'm asking what her family does.

CHER
You're asking me the same questions you
would ask anyone.

PHYLLIS
I'm asking my daughter if she's found a
partner that makes her happy. And you
know what? Thank God you're healthy.

They eat and sip their tea in silence again.

CHER
Is this intimacy?

PHYLLIS
Evidently.

CHER
I don't think so much of it.

PHYLLIS
Yeah, I could take it or leave it.
(sips her tea quietly)
Do you think that chair should be in
the other corner?

CHER
I wasn't going to say anything.

They get up and slide the overstuffed chair across the room together. Phyllis sits in the chair and looks sadly around.

PHYLLIS
It should have been more peaceful.

CHER
I know.

CUT TO:

EXT. SILVER HOUSE BACK YARD - MORNING

CLOSE ON - THE BACK OF A GRAVESTONE as Phyllis lovingly wipes snow away from the stone.

PHYLLIS
(whispers)
Thank you, God, for giving me awareness
and health.

THE SMALL GRAVESTONE READS:

"In loving memory of Panda 1968 - 1983 of natural causes"
Phyllis smiles and places a small rock on the headstone.

EXT. BEAUMONT HOSPITAL - MORNING

The sun rises and begins to melt the snow on the lawn of the big white hospital

INT. MATERNITY WARD, NURSERY - MORNING

Victoria stands in scrubs and a mask holding one of her babies with wires and IV's flowing from him. She sighs and watches the baby with happy eyes.

INT. AIRPLANE - MORNING

Francie snaps her seat belt on as people get settled.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Hey! I know you. Did your dad get off
ok?

Francie looks up and it's the same flight attendant as her trip in. She smiles down at Francie.

FRANCIE

Oh-um. Yeah. It was... great.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

That's good. It's so nice to have a close family.

The attendant moves down the aisle and Francie smiles her mother's smile. She pulls out her book and looks at the business card book mark.

CLOSE ON CARD - Dr. Ron Schwartz's business card. Francie turns it over and looks at the hand written note on the back. "Call me. Ron."

Francie crumples the business card and stuffs it in the garbage bag as the flight attendant passes around again.

INT. HOSPICE OF THE GOOD ANGELS, HALLWAY - MORNING

Phyllis and Dottie wheel Robbie down the hall. Dottie carries a small suitcase and the electric Chanukah menorah. Sister Michael keeps pace with a disapproving frown.

SISTER MICHAEL

The medicines only put off the inevitable. If it's God's plan that-

PHYLLIS

I've done God's plan. Now God can do my plan.

SISTER MICHAEL

But you can't-

PHYLLIS

Out of my way, Sister!

EXT. HOSPICE OF THE GOOD ANGELS - MORNING

Phyllis and Dottie wheel Robbie out, all three grinning.

PHYLLIS

(giggles)
I've always wanted to say that.

DOTTIE

(realizing *she's* the sister)
Hey!

EXT. EDGE OF CEMETERY - MORNING

Samuel stares through the fence at his father's grave. He wipes a tear away for so many things missed.

SHOSHANNA (O.S.)

Shmuel?

Shoshanna steps up and takes Samuel's arm.

SHOSHANNA

I'm so proud of you. Your father died
as God would have him.

(she hugs him)

Let's go home.

They turn and head for the minivan.

EXT. SYBIL'S APT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cher tentatively rings the bell, then knocks the knocker. She nervously twirls a red rose. The door opens and Cher's smile freezes in place.

A strange woman, LAURA(30), stands there in her pajamas.

LAURA

Hi.

Laura looks at the brave little flower.

LAURA

Pretty.

(calls to Sybil)

I think it's for you.

Sybil comes to the door, also in her pajamas, holding a bowl of popcorn. Laura relinquishes her position, hovering in the BG. Sybil's face is a mixture of surprise and something else.

SYBIL

When did you get back?

CHER

(sarcastic)

Not soon enough, I guess.

(takes a deep breath)

So. What I have to say won't take very
long, I'll say it and go.

SYBIL

You can come in.

INT. SYBIL'S APT. - NIGHT

Laura stands with arms crossed, watching like a hawk.

SYBIL

Cher, I-

CHER

No. Just let *me* talk. If I don't I'll never get this said. You were right. Feeling scares me. Feeling *anything*.

Cher's distracted by the oil painting leaning against the wall. It's of Cher, Sybil and their friends.

CHER

That's fantastic.

SYBIL

Thanks.

CHER

(back on point)

Anyway, even though it's too late-

SYBIL

You don't-

CHER

Now that I'm willing to venture into the world of adults and actually feel, what I feel is... what I feel is that...

Sybil waits, breath held. Cher can't say it.

CHER

God. You know what? My father damaged the things he loved most. And that's what I do. I love you. I would have rather blown my brains out than hurt you. And by not admitting my feelings I hurt you anyway and... I'm sorry.

(almost in tears)

Well. There. I made it real.

She turns to go.

SYBIL

Cher, wait.

(motions for Laura)

Laura? I guess you figured this is Cher. Cher this is my sister, Laura.

Cher turns, thunderstruck, embarrassed. Laura grins at her.

CHER
I, um,... I didn't recognize you from
your pictures.

LAURA
I go blind when I panic too. It's cool.
(to Sybil)
Do you guys mind if I leave you alone
for a few? It's way too intense in here.

Laura disappears into the bedroom, leaving them alone.

SYBIL
(at the rose)
Is that for me?

CHER
Oh.
(hands the rose to Sybil)
Yeah.

SYBIL
This is the first time you've ever
brought me...
(looks at the single rose)
Flower.
(beat)
Did you mean what you said?

CHER
What.

SYBIL
About blowing your brains out.

Cher looks at her helplessly.

SYBIL
Just checking for something I can hold
against you later.

Sybil smiles, reaches in and grabs Cher. They kiss a long
passionate kiss. When they break, Cher can't catch her
breath, hyperventilates.

SYBIL
Oh, Honey. Did I do that?

CHER
(gasping for breath)
Don't... flatter yourself... stress.

SYBIL

Do you have any idea how much I adore
your neurotic little butt?
(laughs and hugs Cher close)
Anyway your brains are much too cute to
be splattered all over the pavement.

Cher nods, still hyperventilating. Sybil takes on a
familiar "Silver" dead pan tone.

SYBIL

But it *would* give a whole new meaning
to the words "street smart."

Cher's breath CATCHES in her surprise to hear the Silver
word game from Sybil. It calms her. She takes on the "game
tone."

CHER

No doubt my brains would land in the
express lane. For a quick getaway.

SYBIL

No. That's the *self* express lane. And
you're gonna find out what that's for.

CHER

Oh, really?

SYBIL

Yeah, really.

CHER

I suppose you think you're the driver?

SYBIL

I'm the master driver, baby.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

A hand hangs out the fourth floor window with a cigarette.

INT. CHER AND SYBIL'S NEW APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mugsy smokes out the window. The huge room is lit with candles.

MUGSY

Woo! Woo! Listen to that echo.

The sound of a baby crying fills the room.

MUGSY (O.S.)

Ohh. See? Now that hurts my ears.

Sybil and Cher, Wendy and Lisa shushing the BABY, sit in the middle of the room around a casual floor picnic. On the wall behind them, Sybil's oil painting of the friends, and just below it Arnie's saxophone on a stand, no other furniture. Mugsy tamps out her cigarette and joins them.

MUGSY

What the hell are you guys gonna do to fill this place?

Cher sighs deeply and takes Sybil's hand.

CHER

Love each other.

MUGSY

(to the others)

I think I liked the old Cher better.

LISA

Clinically, you know, Cher's grown.

WENDY

Yeah, she gave up rent control.

CHER

Don't remind me.

SYBIL

We'll just call this our grand experiment. And barring that, we could always keep jumping up and down to avoid the impact.

Cher looks at her friends.

CHER

You know I love you guys-

MUGSY

Oh my god, if you say it again I'm gonna have to kill something with my bare hands.

(beat)

Hey. Wanna know what *I* did today?

WENDY

What.

MUGSY

Got a porn star out of her contract.

CHER
We're so proud.

EXT. CHER AND SYBIL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

The sounds of our friends continues out over the city.

FADE OUT:

A silent video plays. This time our new family of Cher, Mugsy, Sybil, and Wendy, try to make a doomed pyramid.

Mugsy playfully gives the camera the "finger." The video suddenly dissolves to SCRATCHY VIDEO like the Silver family home movies in the beginning.

The baby walks unsteady steps to Cher and she cheers him on with the Mr. Rabbit puppet.

Cher and Sybil hold hands, deep in conversation at the table when they notice the camera. Cher "walks" Mr. Rabbit into the camera closer and closer until it goes black.

THE END