

"THE DONOR"

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Affluent, artistic, yet non-ostentatious décor surrounds MICHAEL REILLY (39) as he lies in his California king bed. He stares at the ceiling, lost in thought.

Next to him, his wife PAULA (38), spry cropped haircut and well-toned, athletic body, sleeps soundly.

MICHAEL
(Northern Irish
accent)
Paula.

PAULA
...hmmm?

MICHAEL
Paula. What's your body temperature?

PAULA
...what?

MICHAEL
I'm sorry to wake you. The doctor
wants you to take your body
temperature. At this time of day.
Before we go to the office tomorrow.

Groggy, she rolls over, sits up, heads to the adjacent master bathroom with a grumble. The bathroom light snaps on. Faucet water runs in the b.g.

PAULA (O.S.)
You sound wide awake.

MICHAEL
I stayed up.

PAULA (O.S.)
Till three in the morning?

MICHAEL
I couldn't sleep.

PAULA (O.S.)

Well, try to get some sleep, honey.
It's going to be a long appointment.

Michael doesn't answer. He sits up on the bed, stares in the direction of the lit bathroom.

INT. OB/GYN PRACTICE LOBBY - DAY

In the crowded, Spartan medical lobby with years-old magazines on end tables, a young couple tries to soothe a cranky baby as she wails.

Next to the couple, Michael and Paula sit together, browsing through a shared home decorating magazine. A RECEPTIONIST walks in with a clipboard.

RECEPTIONIST

Michael and Paula Reilly? Doctor Graf
is ready to see you now.

PAULA

Here we go.

MICHAEL

I hope she can help us.

PAULA

Well, she has great recs, love.

MICHAEL

For the amount she's charging us,
she'd better live up to those recs.

Paula grasps Michael's hand. The two get up and follow a NURSE into the doctor's office.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Airy and soothing private office, with lots of greenery and windows that allow natural light. Wearing a doctor's jacket and nametag, her hair in a stern bun behind her head, ELISABETH GRAF (33) sits across from Paula and Michael.

She takes a moment to examine Paula and Michael's paperwork.

ELISABETH

Well, according to the ASRM, you two theoretically fit into the Level III age range. But judging by the medical history your primary physician provided for both of you, you might be healthy enough to qualify as Level II candidates.

MICHAEL

Meaning ...?

ELISABETH

In short, meaning that is good news for you both. Barring any infections or abnormalities your primary doctor might have not detected, we can go through the normal Level II treatment procedures that are much less involved and expensive than Level III procedures.

MICHAEL

And -- if Level II doesn't work?

ELISABETH

Then we move on to Level III, which, as I will explain, is much more involved. After six months of Level III treatment and you still do not conceive, I will probably have to refer you to a reproductive endocrinologist.

PAULA

Whoa, back up. What kinds of treatments would we have to go through with ... the type of doctor you just mentioned?

ELISABETH

Reproductive endocrinologists assist you with your endocrine gland functions and possible disorders and abnormalities in the way your body produces the hormones needed for proper conception.

PAULA

That's pretty heavy stuff.

ELISABETH

They are quite at the forefront of modern medicine. They can also assist you with assisted reproductive technologies and microsurgeries, if you need them.

PAULA

Okay, maybe I'll be able to digest all of that when the time comes.

She and Michael share a small laugh. Elisabeth smiles.

ELISABETH

I assure you that all of this medical jargon will become clearer as you complete your treatment. I am available by mobile if you have any questions, and I have an on-call nurse, Debbie, who can answer any questions in the event that I am assisting other clients.

MICHAEL

Much appreciated.

ELISABETH

That's what we're here for.

She smiles again at them, favoring Michael with a peculiar interest.

INT. OB/GYN PRACTICE LOBBY - DAY

With paperwork in hand, Elisabeth walks the couple toward the building's exit. Paula carries some pamphlets and other medical reading material. The doctor shakes both Michael's and Paula's hands.

ELISABETH

Well, Paula and Michael, I look forward to working with both of you,
(MORE)

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

and here's to a healthy and successful conception! I want to remind you that the more stress in your lives that you're able to trim down, barring all other abnormalities, the easier it will be for you to conceive. And remember that, despite all the technology the practice can offer, it all starts in your hearts.

PAULA

Oh, isn't that sweet?

MICHAEL

We appreciate your helping us, Doctor.

ELISABETH

Well, I appreciate your being responsible and careful clients. Now, I have outlined all the risks, costs, and procedures involved ... did I give you all OF the information I said I would?

PAULA

It looks like you gave us a good pile to start with, thanks!

ELISABETH

Good. Paula, you can call Terry to schedule a full examination anytime within the next two weeks. I would like you to please refrain from work on the day you come in.

PAULA

Really? Is it going to put me out that bad?

ELISABETH

Not at all; I just want you to feel relaxed and experiencing no undue pressure or stress. Look forward to seeing you and have a nice afternoon.

MICHAEL

The same, Doctor.

The couple turns to leave. Elisabeth hesitates a moment before taking her next patients.

ELISABETH

Michael, forgive me for this observation, but you look so much like --

She cuts herself off, covers her mouth, embarrassed. Michael looks at her with an interested half-smile.

MICHAEL

Like whom?

ELISABETH

You wouldn't happen to be related to any Grafs in Germany, would you?

MICHAEL

Afraid not.

ELISABETH

You're from Northern Ireland, is that right?

MICHAEL

How did you -- ? My medical records, of course. Yes, I'm from Derry.

ELISABETH

Derry. But it's also known as Londonderry, is that right?

MICHAEL

That's what the Brits call it.

PAULA

I wouldn't know. I've never been to Ireland. Northern or otherwise. You ready to go, hon? I have a few clients to call before the shops close.

MICHAEL

All right, let's go. On the Derry versus Londonderry point, Doctor, I guess it depends on what side of the fence you're on.

ELISABETH

Interesting. Well, I don't mean to hold you up, so have a nice day and I'll be consulting you.

PAULA

You, too. Thanks!

Michael and Paula leave. Elisabeth glances after them as she attends to her next patients.

INT. ELISABETH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Windows are everywhere; greenery sits on every table and in every corner of the spacious room. The only sound is of wind chimes in the b.g.

Elisabeth lies wide awake on her clean, white sofa. She stares at three huge drawings above her fireplace.

THE DRAWINGS

Each of the drawings is a yellowed, monochrome sketch of a well-proportioned human figure in a different active pose. The sketches are basic yet quite sophisticated; it is clear that all of the sketches were done by the same artist. The figures look almost godlike in their detail -- almost too perfect to be human.

INSERT: SIGNATURE IN BOTTOM RIGHT CORNER OF DRAWING

O. Graff 17/2/52

END INSERT

EXT. HOSPITAL COURTYARD - DAY

Amid the medical personnel on break, Elisabeth sits at a small table alone, sipping a coffee. She sifts through the patient files, all stacked neatly in manila folders. She studies one in particular.

The files that have caught Elisabeth's interest is the medical history for Michael.

INSERT: MEDICAL HISTORY/DOCTOR'S COMMENTS SECTION

Michael Reilly, age 19, is recovering nicely from his shotgun wounds. An Irish-Catholic, he was the victim of an accidental exchange of bullets between IRA gunmen and British Army soldiers as he was returning home from Trinity University...

END INSERT

Elisabeth puts her hand to her mouth in surprise. She looks around her to make sure no one is watching. She sneaks Michael's medical folder into her briefcase.

INT. ELIZABETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Curled up in a comfortable ball, Elisabeth sleeps soundly.

DREAM SEQUENCE - EXT. DERRY ALLEY BEHIND ROWHOUSES - NIGHT

The alley is eerily quiet and fog-covered -- not like a real alley at all but more like a transparent, otherworldly dark heaven.

Through the fog, YOUNG MICHAEL (19), nonchalant and carefree, coasts down the alleyway on a rusted ten-speed bike, wearing college clothes and wielding a backpack on his back.

FOUR IRA GUNMEN in black ski masks run across the alleyway from behind one garbage dumpster to another. One of the IRA gunmen stops for a moment to rebuke Young Michael, who rides past them on his bike.

IRA GUNMAN

Get outta here, y'omadhan! Ya wanna
get yourself killed, do ya?

Young Michael hits his brakes. The rusted bike squeals to an uneasy stop. Breathless, he waits a few moments; then reverses his front wheel, pedals in the direction from which he came.

A sudden ambush of British soldiers fires upon Young Michael from seemingly out of nowhere. One bullet pegs Young Michael in the shoulder; another gets him in the stomach.

Young Michael falls to the ground, spits out blood. He clutches his stomach with one hand, tries to pull his backpack off with the other, but cannot.

Several of the British soldiers charge forward, but the AMBUSH LEADER holds them back.

AMBUSH LEADER

Hold your fire! Damn it! All bloody hell, we got a civilian!

Helpless, he and the others freeze in place, survey the hurt young man on the ground.

Unseen to the ambush group, the IRA gunmen steal away from behind their hiding place.

Horrified, the soldiers finally help Young Michael out of his backpack slings and lay him on the ground. Unable to talk, Young Michael drools out blood, trembles.

ONE SOLDIER freaks out, starts to SOB.

SOLDIER

Oh, my God, I can't bloody believe this! We hit an innocent man! What if he bloody dies?

AMBUSH LEADER

Hold yourself together! We've got to get him to Hospital.

ELISABETH (O.S.)

It's all right. I'm a doctor.

The soldiers all turn their heads to see

ELISABETH

who steps out of the fog with her doctor's kit. She is dressed in a white jacket and all-white clothes. The soldiers back away from Young Michael, allow her passage.

She kneels on the ground beside Young Michael, who struggles to breathe. She sets her doctor's kit beside him, holds his face in both of her hands.

Almost instantly, his breathing normalizes and his pain-contorted face calms and grows peaceful. He smiles at Elisabeth.

YOUNG MICHAEL

I knew you would help me.

END OF DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. ELISABETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Elisabeth wakes up with a soft smile. She closes her eyes again and cuddles with her pillow.

INT. MICHAEL AND PAULA'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

Michael busies himself on a computer drafting program. From an opposite desk and computer, Paula reads Internet information aloud.

PAULA

I found it! This Web site says that an IUI is cheaper and less risky than in vitro.

MICHAEL

Fascinating. IUI means...?

PAULA

Let me see..."intrauterine insemination." Maybe we should talk to the doctor about that, huh? Before we feel like we have to move on to the more expensive stuff?

MICHAEL

Fair enough.

PAULA

Oh, and Michael, I also found these Web sites that talk about different types of other fertility treatments. You should come read them.

MICHAEL

I'm a wee bit busy now, love.

PAULA

Too busy to ... get busy? Y'know, all this research on sperm matching up with eggs is making me horny.

Paula flashes a mischievous smile, slips beside Michael's chair. She massages his shoulders, starts to kiss him with passion. Michael heaves a frustrated sigh.

PAULA

What?

MICHAEL

I can't -- perform right now. I'm sorry. Why don't we just leave this up to the doctor?

PAULA

Honey, even the doctor needs a little help from Mother Nature.

She kisses him, puts on a play puss-face.

PAULA

Please? Pretty-pretty-please?

MICHAEL

Oh...all right.

Paula jumps up giddily and turns off her cell phone and her computer monitor. Michael grumbles and heads out. Playful, Paula jumps on him piggy-back style. Unenthusiastic, he carries her off.

INT. PAULA AND MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Covered in sweat, Michael and Paula hold each other under the covers in bed.

PAULA

Wasn't that fun, honey? Aren't you glad we took a sex break?

MICHAEL

Yeah. As fun as it can be, I guess.

PAULA

Well, good. The doctor said as long as it doesn't turn into an obligation.

Michael has no answer to that one. He holds Paula tightly and tries to cuddle.

MICHAEL

Maybe, in the meantime, we should get us a dog. I hear dachshunds are quite the characters.

PAULA

Bad idea. For now, anyway. How's a puppy going to feel a year down the road if we all of a sudden pay more attention to our baby than him?

MICHAEL

It was just an idea.

Neither of them talk for a while until a cell phone rings on Paula's nightstand. She picks up.

PAULA

Hello?

(listens)

All right, one second. Michael, it's Doctor Graf's appointment scheduler. She wants to talk to you.

MICHAEL

Me? I thought you were going in alone on Thursday.

Paula shrugs, hands the phone to Michael.

MICHAEL

This is Michael Reilly.

INT. CAR DRIVING - DAY

Dressed in business attire, Michael drives his newer-model luxury sedan with MONTE PARISI (38) in shotgun. In contrast to Michael's more formal dress, Monte wears shorts and a button-down Hawaiian shirt.

MONTE

I don't get it. You're a partner of your own company and you don't even get Labor Day off?

MICHAEL

Unluckily, no.

MONTE

That sucks. You should look into rewriting your employee handbook. Everyone gets Labor Day off. Isn't it a federal holiday or something?

MICHAEL

I suppose in the States, it is.

MONTE

In case you missed the boat in Derrytown, we are in the States.

MICHAEL

All right, then. In any event, thank you for joining me on my lunch-break appointment. I could use all the moral support I can get.

MONTE

No worries, man. As long as you keep your promise about the free Labor Day spirits after work.

Michael gives Monte a friendly punch. Monte chuckles.

INT. OB/GYN PRACTICE LOBBY - DAY

The waiting area is filled with waiting clients. Flipping through his smartphone, Monte lounges in a waiting chair across from Michael, who sits with his hands folded, impatient.

Something on the smartphone catches Monte's attention. He picks it up and shows it to Michael.

MONTE

Jesus. Phone apps for babies. Didn't have that when my kids were babies.

MICHAEL

Fascinating; I should show that to Paula. She's into that sort of thing.

(pause)

So Monte, how are the kids these days? Do you ever hear from them?

Monte gives Michael a glum look, pockets his smartphone.

MONTE

Don't even get me started.

MICHAEL

Not again. Have you complained to your lawyer?

MONTE

Not yet, but dead on I'm going to. She is giving me the most bogus bullshit excuses for me not to see the kids. She says it's too expensive to fly them out here and shit.

MICHAEL

Not the first time she's pulled that number on you. Have you considered flying out to Fresno to see your girls?

MONTE

If I had to, yes, I'd fly out there. I just don't want to deal with What's Her Face when all I want is to see Morgan and Kendra.

MICHAEL

Well, if you want us to mind your house for you while you're gone, we can check in.

MONTE

Thanks, man. I don't mean to unload on you like this. Jesus. But I guess you have your own pains in the ass to put up with, eh?

MICHAEL

My good friend, you have no idea.

They share a good-hearted chuckle. A NURSE comes by with a clipboard.

NURSE

Michael Reilly?

MICHAEL

That's me.

MONTE

(Don't let her squeeze your balls too hard, man.)

MICHAEL

(Shut the hell up, Monte.)

The two men share a warm chuckle as Michael gets up to follow the nurse. Monte picks up a magazine from an end table, flips through it.

INT. EXAMINING ROOM - DAY

In his undershirt and boxers, Michael stands on a medical scale as Elisabeth adjusts the various levers to get his height and weight readings.

ELISABETH

Your weight is normal for your height and age. You do get regular exercise, yes?

MICHAEL

Swimming. And occasional yoga, when my wife drags me to it.

ELISABETH

Good. You can step down from the scale. Do you smoke, or have you ever smoked?

MICHAEL

No.

ELISABETH

How much alcohol do you consume in an average week?

Michael hesitates, blushes a bit.

MICHAEL

I'm Irish. I suppose about average for an Irishman. A drink or two about every night. Guess that makes me a teetotaler where I come from.

ELISABETH

(soft chuckle)

Two drinks a night is acceptable for healthy men with no adverse reaction to alcohol, and who aren't alcoholic. Do you brush and floss regularly?

MICHAEL

Beg your pardon?

ELISABETH

Believe it or not, your dental hygiene affects fertility, even male fertility.

MICHAEL

I didn't know that.

ELISABETH

Oral bacteria can infect your reproductive organs when released into your bloodstream. Could you sit on the examining bench for me, please?

Michael obeys, and she takes his pulse, temperature, and blood pressure as she talks.

ELISABETH

I would normally have my own nurse do these routine checks for me, but she's out with a sick child and we couldn't find a replacement.

MICHAEL

That's quite all right. Can I ask why you're having me here before my wife's appointment?

ELISABETH

I neglected to set up a separate appointment for you and I apologize. In the fertility world, an abundance of emphasis is often placed initially on a woman's inability to conceive. This often deprives us of the opportunity to pinpoint male fertility problems early on in the conception process. Your pulse is normal, by the way. Please lift your tongue for the thermometer.

MICHAEL

(mumbling)

Problems such as...?

ELISABETH

There are numerous factors. Infertility can be due to bacterial infections, as I alluded to earlier; low sperm count; sexually-transmitted diseases, for which you and Paula have already tested negative; excessive heat; excessive friction or wearing undergarments that are too tight --

MICHAEL

Is that so? Paula's making me wear boxers every day because of some article she read on the Internet. She'll be glad to know it's not an old wives' tale.

ELISABETH

No, there is validity to wearing loose underwear. Your temperature is normal. Can I see your arm?

MICHAEL

She read that hot tubs and hot baths can affect fertility. Is this true?

ELISABETH

Yes, excessive heat can lower the quality of your sperm. Your blood pressure is normal: one-hundred-and-nineteen over seventy. You can step down from the table now and get dressed.

Michael does as he's told. Elisabeth clasps her hands together, looks at him directly.

ELISABETH

One more thing. Now for an awkward, but necessary, question. I must ask you if you have trouble ejaculating.

MICHAEL

Excuse me?

ELISABETH

When you and your wife have intercourse, do you have problems reaching orgasm?

MICHAEL

No. Not usually.

ELISABETH

Not usually?

MICHAEL

Not to get into overly personal details, but it doesn't ... happen naturally when lovemaking becomes too much of a fertility chore.

Her tone softens from her clinical doctor's demeanor.

ELISABETH

It takes patience, Michael. Patience, love, relaxation, and time. For you as well as Paula.

Michael nods. Elisabeth smiles, writes on her clipboard.

ELISABETH

That's all I need for today. I would like you to schedule a follow-up appointment, and as I asked of Paula, I would like you to refrain from work on the day of the follow-up.

MICHAEL

Why is that?

ELISABETH

I am going to need you to submit a sperm sample to the andrology lab for an analysis. If the analysis shows any abnormalities, I might have to then refer you to an urologist. If your employer requires it, I can write you a doctor's note.

MICHAEL

That won't be necessary, but thank you.

ELISABETH

All right. A few more things.

Elisabeth gives him a vial, a sterile container, and a sheet of instructions.

ELISABETH

From the privacy of your home, you need to collect an ejaculate sample in this container no longer than three to four hours before your appointment.

MICHAEL

Emmm...won't it go bad?

ELISABETH

The nutrient liquid in this vial will help preserve the specimen. Make sure you follow the instructions exactly.

MICHAEL

Emmm...all right.

With a grimace, he takes the materials from her.

INT. OB/GYN PRACTICE LOBBY - DAY

Elisabeth escorts Michael out to the lobby, where Monte waits. He glances over his magazine at them, returns his attention to the mag; then peers over the magazine for a longer moment -- this time, at Elisabeth.

ELISABETH

I will see you at your scheduled appointment. Let me know if you and Paula have any questions, all right?

MICHAEL

Fair enough.

With not-so-subtle haste, Monte tucks in his shirt and buttons its top button. He stands up to meet Michael and Elisabeth. Michael lets out a knowing groan.

MONTE

Hey, Michael! How'd it go, man?

MICHAEL

So far, so good.

MONTE

Wonderful! That's wonderful news, man! See, I told you, you had nothing to worry about.

ELISABETH

I take it you're a friend of Michael's?

MONTE

Yeah, I'm Monte. I'm here for morale. You know, it's a man thing.

ELISABETH

That's lovely. Michael, you are fortunate to have such a supportive friend. That's important.

MICHAEL

I am. I mean, it is. So Monte, are you ready to go? I've got a one-thirty meeting.

MONTE

Sure thing. Hey Doc, thanks for helping out Michael and his wife.

MICHAEL

(Monte. Let's go.)

MONTE

And what's your name, Doctor?

ELISABETH

Graf. Doctor Graf.

MONTE

Great to meet you!

MICHAEL

I apologize, Monte, but we have to cut it short. Thanks again, Doctor, and I'll be sure to set up an appointment.

ELISABETH

Good. Have a nice afternoon, both of you.

MONTE

Hey, you too, Doc!

Much chagrined, Michael practically has to drag Monte out of the lobby.

Elisabeth pretends to look at her schedule, watches after them with mixed puzzlement and curious intrigue. She eavesdrops on the men's ensuing conversation as they head o.s.

MONTE (O.S.)

So what the hell are those vials for?

MICHAEL (O.S.)

(barely audible)

(Shhhh. They're for sperm samples.)

MONTE (O.S.)
Sperm samples?! Holy crap!

MICHAEL (O.S.)
(Shhhhh! For God's sake, Monte!)
Elisabeth conceals some giggles, returns to her work.

INT. CAR DRIVING - DAY

Michael, agitated, stares out the window while Monte drives.

MICHAEL
No.

MONTE
Jesus, Michael, it's just for coffee.

MICHAEL
Monte, no.

MONTE
Look, I won't intrude on your doctor-patient setup, if that's what you're so uptight about.

MICHAEL
Monte, if you could do me a favor and hit on someone else other than a fertility doctor whose main responsibility is to probe every part of my body and ask me if I have trouble ejaculating.

MONTE
So what are you trying to do now, make me jealous? Good buddy, lookit, your private life and what goes on in that doctor's office is none of my business and she should know that. She's a professional, right? I know you're trying hard to have a baby with Paula, and I'm sure the doctor, if she's a good one, would respect the fact that the subject's off-limits.

MICHAEL

You're talking as if you've already asked her out and she's said yes.

MONTE

Hey, you gotta think positive. So what's her first name?

MICHAEL

Elisabeth. Monte, it will be extremely awkward if you were to start dating my infertility specialist.

MONTE

I'll make it not be awkward. I promise.

MICHAEL

That's if you get around to asking her out to coffee, and if she even obliges.

MONTE

Like I said, you gotta think positive, man.

MICHAEL

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, Monte, you act like you're thirteen sometimes.

MONTE

That's how I stay young and virile.

MICHAEL

I'll try not to take that as a backhanded slap.

He stews out the window as Monte keeps driving with a grin.

EXT. SMOOTHIE SHOP - NIGHT

The smoothie shop sits on a street corner not far from Michael's office and parking lot.

INT. SMOOTHIE SHOP

Several health-conscious granola types sit around the shop ordering healthy libations. Arriving in his full business attire and carrying his briefcase, Michael is a stark contrast to the crunchy types.

The cashier, DONNY, recognizes Michael right away. Neither of them notice

ELISABETH OUTSIDE UNDER A STREETLIGHT

peering through the shop's window at Michael. When Donny casts a glance out the window, Elisabeth darts around the corner of a building.

DONNY

Hey Reilly! What's happening?

MICHAEL

Hello there, Donny. No news is good news, that's all I can conjure up tonight.

DONNY

No news on the baby front?

MICHAEL

Not yet. Still trying.

DONNY

I keep telling you, you can have any of my kids if you want to skip the diaper thing.

MICHAEL

I'd have a hard time convincing my wife of that. Think she wants the diaper thing.

DONNY

Ah, it was just a thought. Am I getting you the usual today?

MICHAEL

Yep. Extra spirulina, extra banana, light on the blackberries.

DONNY

You got it.

As Donny fixes Michael's drink, Elisabeth peeks around her hiding place at Michael.

INT. PAULA AND MICHAEL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Paula sits at an eat-in-kitchen table, types on her laptop. She doesn't look up as an exasperated Michael comes in. He tosses car keys, paperwork, and specimen materials on the counter.

PAULA

Hi, honey.

MICHAEL

Hello, Paula. I'm a damn bloody pushover, and Monte should be a lawyer or teenager, or something.

PAULA

What happened? Did he flake out on you with the appointment?

MICHAEL

No. He made it all right. You want to hear the business?

Paula shuts her laptop as Michael sits across from her.

MICHAEL

He embarrassed the living hell out of me in the doctor's office today. The minute he laid eyes on Doctor Graf, he started to -- to hit on her, for the love of Jesus. And then on the way back to the office, he suggests asking her out for coffee.

PAULA

Gee, why am I not surprised? My God, he's been a total horndog since the day you met him. I swear, you two are the Odd Couple.

MICHAEL

Our infertility specialist! I don't know how in God's name I'm going to face her if he does ask her out.

PAULA

Oh, Michael, it's not a big deal. She'll probably think he's just being cute and say no anyway. I'm not knocking either one of them when I'm saying this, but he's totally not in her league.

She gets up, opens a bottle of wine. Before she pours a glass, she notices the specimen container. Curious, she picks it up, inspects it.

PAULA

Did the doctor give you this?

MICHAEL

Yeah. I need to bring in a sperm sample for my next appointment.

PAULA

Oh good, another sample container to add to the growing collection.

MICHAEL

This is just driving me mad. Why would he even think of...? Oh, Paula, maybe we should look for another specialist.

PAULA

After all the shit we went through looking for the one we just found? Hell no! Look, I totally think you're overreacting, Michael. Nothing bad is going to happen if Monte asks the doctor out for a cup of coffee.

Paula puts down both the bottle of wine and the specimens. She starts to give Michael's shoulders a sensual rub and a few smooches on the back of his neck.

PAULA

Y'know, the doctor said you've got to relax. No stressing, remember?

MICHAEL

Paula, not tonight. I'm tired.

PAULA

No lovie-dovies for my honey-bear?

MICHAEL

Paula, I'm sorry, but I just don't have it in me tonight.

Pissed, Paula pushes away from him, retreats to the freezer. She grabs a frozen dinner, tosses it in the microwave.

PAULA

Okay. Fine. Want something to eat?

MICHAEL

No. I'm going to sleep.

PAULA

Suit yourself. I'm eating. And having a drink.

Exhausted, Michael pushes himself away from the table and leaves. Paula leans on the counter, pours herself a glass of wine, watches the microwave meal whirl around on the turntable.

INT. ELISABETH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lying awake in a nightshirt on her couch, Elizabeth again stares at the THREE HUGE DRAWINGS above her fireplace for a while until she falls asleep.

DREAM SEQUENCE - THE DRAWINGS

One of the figures in the drawings morphs into a naked likeness of Michael, complete with faded gunshot scars in his shoulder and stomach.

He smiles at her, steps out of the drawing's picture frame, lies down on the couch next to her. Elisabeth sits up, smiles, cradles Michael's head.

ELISABETH
I'll always take care of you.

Hearing her own voice in the dream, Elisabeth wakes up. She sits up on her couch and stares again at the drawings.

END OF DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. OB/GYN PRACTICE ANDROLOGY LAB - DAY

In her doctor's jacket, Elisabeth walks up to JANICE (28) who generates labels for specimen containers.

ELISABETH
Janice? I need you to check out an IUI specimen to me for further examination. The client's last name is Reilly; his first name is Michael.

JANICE
Okay. Just a sec.

ELISABETH
Take your time.

Janice puts away her labeling project and looks in a temperature-monitored vault for the specimen.

JANICE
Michael Reilly?

ELISABETH
Yes, please.

JANICE
Well, I have a few specimens here with different dates. Which one do you need?

ELISABETH
The most recent one, please.

JANICE
All right. He just came in to give us a specimen this morning.

ELISABETH

Good; I'll take that one.

Janice brings the doctor the specimen, which Elisabeth places carefully in a small, but thick, cooler for medical use. Janice gives her the appropriate paperwork to sign.

JANICE

What do you think could be the matter?

ELISABETH

I have not determined that yet. It might be nothing, but I need to evaluate the specimen under a microscope to be sure.

JANICE

You can use the one in the lab if it'd be easier.

ELISABETH

No. I need to run a series of tests in the Guitierrez lab, which could be time-consuming.

JANICE

Oh jeez. Those people take forever.

ELISABETH

I know, and I don't have forever. It might help if I were to make a request myself. Thank you, Janice.

She turns to leave in haste. Janice holds up the paperwork, hoping to flag her attention.

JANICE

Doctor Graf! Don't you need a copy of this?

ELISABETH

Oh. Right.

She waits for Janice to make a copy, and then hurries off.

INT. ELISABETH'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Elisabeth prints out some authorization forms from her home computer, signs them with an illegible signature, and files them into her briefcase.

EXT. CAR DRIVING - DAY

Elisabeth's car travels on an interstate highway in the middle of nowhere -- clearly a different locale than her hometown. She exits onto a rural highway and continues driving.

INT. CAR DRIVING - DAY

Elisabeth is now dressed comfortably and rather youthfully in jeans and a sweater, not at all in the more formal attire in which she is accustomed.

Next to her in the shotgun seat are the cooler and briefcase, which Elisabeth glances at nervously from time to time.

EXT. SMALL FERTILITY CLINIC - DAY

Touchy-feely New Age-ish fertility center in the heart of a rural arts community. Elisabeth's car pulls up in front of the clinic (but not too close to the window or entrance).

INT. CAR DRIVING - NIGHT

The sun has just set over the horizon as Elisabeth drives. From her briefcase, Elisabeth retrieves the authorization forms she had printed out earlier.

With careful but quick movements, Elisabeth strips the container of its labels; then she gets out of the car with the materials in her hand.

INT. CLINIC LOBBY - NIGHT

Elisabeth walks up to the counter, trying to appear lost and unknowledgeable. A friendly COUNTER ASSISTANT leans over and smiles.

COUNTER ASSISTANT

Hello! How can I help you this evening?

ELISABETH

Hi. Ummm ... I'm Liz Sloane, and I'd scheduled an after-hours appointment for a donor insemination?

The counter assistant looks at her appointment book.

COUNTER ASSISTANT

Yes, you're in here for a six-o'clock with Doctor Mallory. Have you filled out all the necessary paperwork?

ELISABETH

Yes, I brought it in with me. My friend -- he couldn't make it with me today -- filled out the forms he needed to, also.

COUNTER ASSISTANT

Great! Well Liz, let's get you started. If you can come back with me, I'll introduce you to Doctor Mallory. She can answer any questions you might have!

The assistant leads Elisabeth to a private area o.s. from the lobby.

ELISABETH

Thanks. I'm a little nervous!

COUNTER ASSISTANT

That's understandable, and we're here to help.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Looking more nervous than ever, Elisabeth takes deep breaths to focus on the road as she drives. She pats her midriff and smiles to herself.

INT. OB/GYN PRACTICE LOBBY - DAY

Talking to her as they leave, Elisabeth walks with Paula out of an examining room into the lobby. Paula carries with her some specimen cups of her own, plus a home ovulation test kit.

ELISABETH

So far, your hormone levels are normal. If the results of your tests show any abnormalities, I might have you come in for an HSG -- a uterine ex-ray. I might also prescribe some fertility pills, but I would prefer to wait until we get your results back if at all possible.

PAULA

That's cool. I appreciate your being so thorough. I have to admit, I've never had that in a doctor before.

ELISABETH

Well, it is good to consider all options and alternatives, because everyone responds differently to treatment. Meaning what is right for you might not be right for someone else. Have I answered all of your questions? Do you need anything else?

PAULA

I don't think so, Doctor Graf. Like I said, you're so thorough. But ... maybe you could recommend a counselor. For Michael and me.

ELISABETH

Paula, I would be more than happy to make a counseling referral. Of course, you might need your primary physician's sign-off, but I have a number of consults with whom I work. I know a lot of couples who are going through the same thing you are; the conception process can take a huge emotional toll, and you need to have the support -- inside and outside of your marriage.

PAULA

Thank you.

Paula beams at her as she takes the doctor's hand and leaves. Elisabeth smiles after her.

ELISABETH
I'll be in touch.

TERRY (28) walks up to Elisabeth with a small envelope.

TERRY
Hi, Doctor. A man called Monte Parisi left this for you at the front desk.

ELISABETH
Thank you, Terry.

After Terry walks off, Elisabeth opens the envelope. Inside is a prepaid coffee-shop card with a note.

INSERT: NOTE ON CARD

Thought you might like to have a latté with me. Give me a call at 555-1212. Monte (the morale guy).

END INSERT

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Hip, trendy coffee shop occupied by people much younger than Monte and Elisabeth.

Dressed in business-casual clothes, Monte sits across from Elisabeth; both sip lattés. Minus her jacket, the doctor is still dressed in her work clothes.

ELISABETH
Monte. As much as I am flattered by your inviting me here, I have to warn you that I should not fraternize with my clients or their friends outside of my duty.

MONTE
It's not fraternizing, Doctor. It's just coffee.

ELISABETH

You know what I mean. And ... you can call me Elisabeth.

MONTE

Elisabeth. Putting fraternizing aside, would you still want to meet me for coffee? And maybe the occasional dinner and a movie?

ELISABETH

Monte, one thing I ask of you is your discretion.

MONTE

Meaning I don't tell anyone we're going out for coffee?

ELISABETH

Meaning I will keep anything about my clients' treatment confidential and between only me and my clients, and you in turn will not disclose anything of your friends' personal lives to me. Is that an agreement?

MONTE

Scout's honor. You want a refill?

He holds up his empty coffee cup and smiles at her.

EXT. CITY STREET SIDEWALK - NIGHT

The street sidewalk is brightly lit but quiet; the tempo of the nightlife has started to calm down. Monte and Elisabeth walk while drinking their coffees-to-go.

MONTE

So how'd you swing becoming a Board certified doctor at your young age?

ELISABETH

I was just going to ask the same of you regarding your being a university-tenured music professor.

MONTE

Touché. I guess that makes us both prodigies of sorts, in a way, huh?

ELISABETH

Or simply driven at a young age. I remember med school was my life when I was in my early twenties. Everything else was secondary.

MONTE

Heh. I know the feeling.

The two stop to look at each other with mutual admiration, and not a tiny bit of mutual attraction.

MONTE

So did you always want to be in the baby business, then?

ELISABETH

Yes. I always knew I wanted to make life, or at least play a part in making life.

The two keep walking; then stop in front of Elisabeth's conservative, upscale sedan. Elisabeth takes out her keys.

MONTE

That kind of reminds me of myself when I was growing up. I always knew I wanted to make life better. Through music. I hope I'm doing a good job, anyway.

ELISABETH

I am sure you are. You just have to do the best you can, and have confidence in your abilities. That is what my father always told me!

MONTE

That's sage advice. Well, hey ... speaking of music, I'm conducting a Beethoven symphony recital next Friday at the U. You want to come?

ELISABETH

I will have to see if I have anything pressing in my schedule, but barring any emergencies, I should be able to go. Thank you for the invitation, Monte.

MONTE

Great! Well, you know where to reach me. I had a nice time tonight; thanks for humoring me.

ELISABETH

It's not humoring at all; I had a nice time too, Monte, and I look forward to seeing you again. Have a nice night, and drive safely.

MONTE

You too.

She gets in her car and drives off. Monte watches her car go, giving her a little wave. As soon as she's out of sight, Monte jumps up and down, giddy like a little kid.

MONTE

Yes-yes-yes-yes-yes!

Onlookers eye him with curiosity, but Monte doesn't pay them any mind. He skips happily to his own car, an expensive station wagon with lots of bumperstickers on the back of it.

INT. RESTAURANT SALAD BAR - DAY

Typical lunchtime boutique salad bar. In business clothes, Michael doles out modest portions of different food items onto his plate.

In almost a backwards-walking dance, Monte hugs his own plate to his chest excitedly. Monte also wears work clothes, albeit more college-oriented than the polished Michael.

MONTE

Yes-yes-yes-yes-yes! She said she could go to the concert Friday night! What did I tell you, man? You gotta think positive!

MICHAEL

I wish I could, under these circumstances. I still can't digest the fact that you're dating my doctor.

Monte starts dumping mounds injudiciously onto his plate.

MONTE

Aw, don't sweat it, man! She and I made a pact. Personal and clinical gossip about you and Paula is off-limits.

Michael doesn't answer, but his smirk in Monte's direction indicates that he's still a tad uncomfortable about the whole dating thing.

INT. RESTAURANT/DINING TABLE - DAY

Monte chows down on his food while Michael nibbles.

MONTE

So ... how's the baby thing coming? I know you get sick of me asking about it. I'm just curious.

MICHAEL

It's coming ... quite literally, if you'll excuse the pun.

MONTE

Man, that's the oldest one in the book. At least be original. Just kidding.

Michael bends his head toward Monte, glancing around before lowering his voice.

MICHAEL

Do you realize that Paula and I have to go into that doctor's office once a day for that IUI treatment?

MONTE

Run that by me again? What's an IUI?

MICHAEL

Intrauterine insemination. They have to take my sperm, wash it to clean it out of any impurities, and then inject it into Paula. Every day. Do you realize what an intrusion that is into our daily lives?

MONTE

So that means you need to jack off every day into a cup, only to get the results forwarded to their destination, uh, vicariously? That sucks.

MICHAEL

Well, I can take comfort in the notion that the world is teeming with people engaging in the real thing.

INT. ELISABETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Elisabeth's bedroom is airy and diaphanous, even in the dark of nighttime. With light from o.s. by an outside porch light, Monte and Elisabeth lounge in bed, cuddled in sheets. Monte casually flips through a dictionary.

MONTE

Okay, here it is. "Fraternize." Are you ready? "Fraternized, fraternizing, fraternizes. To associate with another in a brotherly or congenial way." Well, I damn hope I'm not "associating" with you in a brotherly way. Sick. That would be incest. And you'd have to be male.

ELISABETH

Well, I am not male and I am not your brother, so that definition is ruled out!

MONTE

Although I would only hope we're at least congenial toward each other. Does that mean you get kicked off the medical board?

ELISABETH

Well, schatze, I certainly think
we've moved beyond congenial!

MONTE

It's always fun to live on the edge,
isn't it?

The two giggle and kiss. Monte gives her a warm embrace; then he gets up and reaches for his shirt and jeans.

MONTE

I'm thirsty. Good sex always makes me
thirsty. Mind if I get myself
something to drink?

ELISABETH

Not at all, schatze. Downstairs in
the fridge, I have spring water,
juice, and I think some Chardonnay.
Glasses are in the top left cupboard.
Please help yourself to whatever you
want.

MONTE

Thanks. Want me to bring you back
something?

ELISABETH

A bottle of water would be nice,
thank you!

MONTE

Okay, back in two shakes!

Monte kisses her and heads downstairs.

INT. KITCHEN/LIVING AREA - NIGHT

From the fridge, Monte grabs two bottles of water and the
bottle of Chardonnay. He is about to pour himself a glass, but
then reconsiders and gets two wine glasses, just in case
Elisabeth were to change her mind.

MONTE

Corkscrew, corkscrew, where's a
corkscrew?

He finds one magneted to the fridge and snags it with a free finger. He heads back upstairs, but stops in the adjacent living room when he sees a

FRAMED PHOTO OF ELISABETH'S FATHER

who bears an incredible resemblance to Michael, save his decades-prior dress and hair; and a short, clipped mustache. Next to the photo is a framed photo of Elisabeth's mother, also from decades past, but she looks more like Elisabeth.

MONTE

Holy shit. How trippy is that?

With fascination, Monte continues staring as he heads upstairs.

MONTE

That is just too freakin' wild!

INT. ELISABETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Monte sits on the bed and plops the wine and glasses on a nightstand. After he gives Elisabeth her bottle of water, he uncorks the wine and starts pouring.

ELISABETH

Oh, thank you. No wine for me, though, thanks.

MONTE

Oh, really? Trying to cut down?

ELISABETH

I don't care for Chardonnay. I received it as a gift from a friend and I don't know what to do with it. I'm glad you can drink it.

MONTE

Well, cheers.

He clinks his glass with Elisabeth's water bottle and they drink.

MONTE

Hey, those eight-by-tens that you have in the living room, are those your parents?

ELISABETH

Yes. Those photos were both taken in Germany before I was born.

MONTE

Your dad. He totally tripped me out! He's got an unbelievable resemblance to Michael.

ELISABETH

I know. I thought the same thing myself when he first came into my office.

MONTE

Oh, man! Wait till I tell Michael about --

(reconsiders)

Oh. Telling Michael about your dad wouldn't breach the patient-doctor thing, would it?

ELISABETH

It's all right; I already told him ... Well, I told him he looked like a relative of mine in Germany, anyway.

MONTE

That is just so wild. That's what I like so much about you. I feel like I learn a new thing everyday about you.

They kiss again.

EXT. PAULA AND MICHAEL'S HOUSE - DAY

Michael drives his car up the driveway, only to be greeted by an enormously excited Paula. She runs up to him with hugs and kisses.

PAULA

Michael! We did it! I'm pregnant! I just got the results this morning!

MICHAEL

Oh, my God. Are you sure?

PAULA

Yes!

MICHAEL

Oh, thank God!

Incredibly happy, Michael lifts her up and whirls her around in a cascade of hugs and kisses.

EXT. SMOOTHIE SHOP - NIGHT

Happy, Michael heads for his usual happy hour smoothie at the shop. He doesn't notice Elisabeth trailing him from a good thirty feet or more behind him. When he goes into the shop, Elisabeth ducks behind a phone pole, peeking after him like a little kid.

INT. SMOOTHIE SHOP - NIGHT

Michael jubilantly gives Donny a kiss. Donny knows right away what the good news is.

MICHAEL

We did it, Donny!

DONNY

Hey, congratulations, man! I'll make you whatever you want, on the house.

MICHAEL

Oh, Donny! You don't have to do that!

DONNY

Hey, it's my treat! For the new dad. Extra spirulina, extra banana, light on the blackberries?

MICHAEL

You got it!

EXT. SMOOTHIE SHOP - NIGHT

As Donny fixes Michael's drink, Elisabeth peeks around the phone pole at Michael and Donny joking and talking MOS. She puts a hand to her midriff and smiles.

INT. MONTE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Elisabeth and Monte sit opposite each other in offbeat chairs. Their statuesque stillness almost makes them good candidates as supplemental décor for Monte's hip, eclectic living room.

Frozen, Monte stares at Elisabeth as if someone had just pulled the pin on a grenade next to his balls. Elisabeth looks more embarrassed and apologetic than shocked.

MONTE

But I thought we used protection.

ELISABETH

Evidently, it failed. No method of birth control is a hundred percent effective.

MONTE

So I've been told, but shit.

ELISABETH

Well ... we're both adults with a big decision on our hands, so the next step is to consider our options.

Monte continues to stare at her dumbly.

EXT. PAULA AND MICHAEL'S BACK PORCH - DAY

While Paula serves the two of them an outdoor brunch, it's now Michael's turn to have a grenade dropped in his lap. He raises his eyebrows as he talks into his cell phone.

MICHAEL

Monte. You want us to what?!

EXT. DOWNTOWN COURTHOUSE - DAY

Dressed in businesslike attire, Paula and Michael trot toward the courthouse entrance. Michael wears a look of complete consternation, and even more so, tiredness.

MICHAEL

This is surreal. This is too much for one person. I cannot believe they're doing this. Cannot!

PAULA

Shhhhh, behave. Monte's your friend, remember?

Arm in arm, they walk inside the courthouse.

INT. JUSTICE'S OFFICE - DAY

While Elisabeth and Monte look on, Paula and Michael both sign the marriage license as witnesses in front of the NOTARY.

INT. COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Inside the lounge, Monte and Michael take their wives' jackets and hang them on a rack. Elisabeth and Paula sit down at a table.

Monte and Michael eye the growing LINE in front of the bar.

BARTENDER

Hey, we're short-staffed today, so could I trouble you all to order your drinks at the bar?

MONTE

Okay, ladies, why don't you take a seat and we'll order the drinks?

ELISABETH

That would be lovely. I'll have some sparkling water, please.

PAULA

A chocolate martini. Thanks.

MICHAEL

All right. We'll be back in a minute.

Elisabeth glances at Paula when she orders her drink. The two men walk off to stand in line.

PAULA

Well! I don't think I got a chance to say congratulations, if it makes you and Monte happy.

ELISABETH

We'll do all right. We have a lot of responsibilities ahead of us; that is for certain.

PAULA

Gotta admit. I never thought I'd run into a fertility doctor who got herself knocked up. With one of her patient's friends, no less.

ELISABETH

Well, doctors are human too. It seems to me many in the general public tend to forget that. But enough about me. How's the baby coming along?

Paula looks upset, forces a strained smile and takes a deep breath.

PAULA

I miscarried last week. We didn't want to tell you until after the wedding.

ELISABETH

Oh, Paula. I'm so sorry! Is there anything I can do?

PAULA

Thanks, but we're fine. We'll be fine, really. It's just been hard, y'know? I mean we just found out that we were pregnant, and it took only a month and a half ... for me to lose the baby.

Paula forces back tears, stares at her placemat. Elisabeth reaches forward and grasps her hand.

INT. BAR AREA - NIGHT

Michael and Monte stand in line waiting for their drinks.

MICHAEL

So ... are you cool with it?

MONTE

Cool with what?

MICHAEL

You know. The marriage.

MONTE

As cool as I'll ever be.

He shrugs, stares ahead. Uncomfortable, Michael waits a few moments before he speaks.

MICHAEL

So do you love her?

Monte doesn't answer immediately, shrugs again. They get closer to the bar.

MONTE

Doesn't matter. She's a nice person. You know, I just want to do the right thing, man.

MICHAEL

I know. That's admirable of you. I'm just ... I just hope you both will be happy together. And that you're right with your decision. You know what I mean?

MONTE

I know. I am.

BARTENDER

Hey there, can I take your orders?

MONTE

Yeah. I'll take a double chocolate martini, a sparkling water, a gin and tonic, and ... what do you want, buddy?

MICHAEL

Just a Guinness. Monte, it's my tab. Please.

MONTE

No, man, don't worry about it. Add a Guinness, please.

BARTENDER

All right then. Your drinks are coming up in a sec.

MONTE

Your concern is touching, buddy. But don't sweat it. It'll all be good.

He forces a smile to reassure Michael, but it doesn't work.

INT. RESTAURANT AREA - NIGHT

With a noticeable look of guilt, Elisabeth offers a tissue. Paula takes it to dab at her eyes.

PAULA

I guess I could sit here all night and bitch and moan about how unfair it is. I mean, a month and a half! After all that work and stress ... Michael was crushed. We had a month and a half to enjoy being pregnant. I should be grateful for that, huh? And just drink my martini and shut up.

ELISABETH

Paula, it's healthy and natural to grieve. And you and Michael can still try to conceive, if you want.

PAULA

No. Not right now. Doctor, we're really grateful --

ELISABETH

Please. Call me Elisabeth.

PAULA

Elisabeth, we're really grateful for all your help, but we really need a break from the babymaking thing for a while.

ELISABETH

Oh?

PAULA

It's put such a strain on our marriage; you wouldn't believe.

ELISABETH

I do believe it, Paula. Trying to have a healthy baby with no results takes its toll on otherwise strong marriages. You and Michael deserve to take some time for your marriage.

PAULA

We will. You've been such a big support for both of us. Thank you.

Paula squeezes Elisabeth's hand. Elisabeth's eyes tear up. Both women laugh through their tears.

ELISABETH

Aren't we a pair! I only wish I could have a martini with you!

The two share another laugh as the men return with all of their drinks.

INT. MARRIAGE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A COUNSELOR (mid-40s) sits across from Paula and Michael, who hold hands.

MICHAEL

I know she wants kids. I started to feel frustrated when I couldn't give them to her. I feel like a failure because I can't deliver. Literally.

PAULA

See, this is one of the main problems. He talks like it's always his fault. But it's not. He got me pregnant. I'm the one who miscarried.

COUNSELOR

Well, I think you both need to treat yourselves more kindly. Just acknowledge that neither of you are at fault for something that is ultimately out of your hands.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Facing the sunset, Paula and Michael share the paddling in a twin kayak. The repetitive, soothing sounds of the WATER and WAVES are calm and meditative.

COUNSELOR (V.O.)

You know, the best gift you two can ultimately give to each other is yourselves.

The sounds almost morph with the healing VOICE of a YOGA INSTRUCTOR in the b.g.

YOGA INSTRUCTOR (V.O.)

You are your own best healer. Your body will let you know its abilities and limitations.

INT. YOGA STUDIO - DAY

With other STUDENTS in a yoga class, Paula and Michael balance themselves in a tree pose while the YOGA INSTRUCTOR offers guidance and checks form.

YOGA INSTRUCTOR

Please keep in mind that yoga isn't a competition, not even with yourselves.

Noticing that Michael is struggling to maintain his balance, the yoga instructor offers him and a couple of other students a chair for balance.

SERIES OF SHOTS - THE YOGA INSTRUCTOR'S VOICE OVER

YOGA INSTRUCTOR (V.O.)

It's important to relax into your poses and never force them. Just let everything flow naturally -- everything in your mind, body, and spirit -- flowing naturally as if into a river.

- 1) Monte walks out of his hip, funky house carrying boxes and loading them into a self-moving van. His house bears a FOR SALE sign with SOLD plastered over it.
- 2) Arm in arm, Michael and Paula walk around in a different city as they're on vacation, pointing out the sights and people, LAUGHING and having fun with each other.
- 3) In a new nursery in Elisabeth's house, Monte and Elisabeth (who's now showing her pregnancy) paint and decorate, equally having fun as they clown around.
- 4) Cuddled on a couch in their home, Michael and Paula read a travel magazine together, pointing out the different places they can visit. Michael kisses Paula's forehead tenderly.
- 5) In her office's lobby, Elisabeth (with a largely growing pregnancy underneath her doctor's jacket), talks with a couple as Monte comes through the door to give her a kiss and a flower. She smiles and kisses him back. The other couple mutually wears a look that says, "That's so sweet."
- 6) Paula looks out a hotel room's window, smiling at a beautiful view. Michael embraces and kisses her, and the two start to make tender love with each other, renewing their romantic relationship.

YOGA INSTRUCTOR (V.O.)

Just completely let go, and let every movement happen with each breath. Maintain the asana breathing as you try to deepen the stretch, and remember to relax into it.

INTERCUTTING YOGA STUDIO/ELISABETH'S BEDROOM - DAY

In different sweats and shirt indicating the passage of time, a more confident Michael raises his arms to his sides with Paula and the other yoga students, parallel to the ground in a yoga warrior's pose. The yoga instructor checks each student's pose and guides them all into a triangle pose.

YOGA INSTRUCTOR

Now hold this position, look at the ceiling, and keep breathing. Maintaining normal breathing is very important.

ELISABETH'S BEDROOM - THE YOGA INSTRUCTOR'S VOICE OVER

Two pairs of hands stretch waterproof sheets across the bed. Her face in anguish from her labor pains, Elisabeth lays on the bed. A DOULA lays beside her, calms her, breathes with her.

YOGA INSTRUCTOR (V.O.)

Keep breathing. You shouldn't be feeling any pain; just release.

Putting on a pair of surgical gloves, and looking somewhat worried, Monte half-smiles as a MIDWIFE MOS reassuringly talks with him.

YOGA STUDIO - MICHAEL

lies on his stomach, looks up at the ceiling as he supports his chest with his elbows and forearms.

YOGA INSTRUCTOR

From Cobra, move into Child Two with your arms stretched out in front of you. We'll hold this pose for a while. This should feel very relaxing and centering.

Michael (and the rest of the class) sits on his heels and bends forward, his arms stretched out in front of him.

ELISABETH'S ROOM - MONTE AND ELISABETH

cry tears of joy as the midwife puts a BUNDLED BABY into Elisabeth's arms. The two coo over the baby and kiss the baby and each other.

YOGA INSTRUCTOR (V.O.)

Feel all your tension flow out of you, and feel rooted into the Earth. We are all connected; we are all full of life and love.

EXT. YOGA STUDIO - NIGHT

The instructor and all of the students pour out of the building, bid one another goodbye, and head to their cars. Paula and Michael give each other a hug and passionate kiss before getting into their car and driving off.

INT. ELISABETH AND MONTE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Monte blends smoothie drinks while Elisabeth nurses BABY KARL. Monte even hums some classical music while he pours the smoothies into glasses and brings a glass over to Elisabeth.

MONTE

Here you go. How's Karl holding up?

ELISABETH

Oh, beautifully. I'm glad I cut back to part-time hours so I can spend more time with him.

MONTE

I'm glad, too. I'm so glad we have him.

He smiles and kisses both Elisabeth and the baby on the foreheads. Elisabeth smiles and takes his hand.

MONTE

Oh, I got some good news yesterday. That contractor came back with an estimate for the addition. He's going to come a few grand under the equity I got from selling my house, so we don't have to shell out any extra.

ELISABETH

That's wonderful, Monte. We can buy new furniture with the extra money. So when could they get started?

MONTE

As early as two weeks from now.

ELISABETH

Great. Then Karl can have his own big-boy's bedroom someday.

Elisabeth stops nursing Karl and props him on her shoulder to burp him. Monte gently takes Karl from her and burps him instead.

MONTE

Here, Mom. You need a break. Let Dad burp the little man for a while.

ELISABETH

Oh, thanks, Monte. And thanks for the smoothie, too!

(pause)

I wonder how Michael and Paula are doing. Have you talked with Michael lately?

MONTE

Nah, not lately. You know, we've both been swamped at work. And this little guy -- well, he's a lot cuter to cuddle with than I'm sure Michael would be.

They both share a small chuckle. Elisabeth gets up, starts picking up around the kitchen.

ELISABETH

Oh, Monte, do you think Michael is still uncomfortable ... about us being together?

MONTE

Why should he, honey? You're not doing the fertility thing with them anymore. And Michael's just ... Irish Catholic.

Monte sits down and cuddles with Karl, who wears little BANDAGES on both of his hands.

MONTE

It's not that he's religious or anything, but he's just ... Michael.

INT. ELISABETH AND MONTE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The lights are off, but Monte and Elisabeth are still visible in the moonlight shining through the window. As Karl sleeps in a nearby crib, the couple cuddles in bed.

ELISABETH

So what did you mean by Michael being just Michael?

MONTE

He just things so seriously, and I can see why. I mean, I've never seen anyone get killed before.

ELISABETH

He witnessed when people were killed?

MONTE

Oh, yeah. When he was in Northern Ireland, he was just a kid when the Bloody Sunday thing was going on. He got shot a couple of times even. He was totally messed up over it. I mean, who wouldn't be, you know what I mean?

ELISABETH

I know. I mean, I can imagine. What made him want to be an architect?

MONTE

Eh, he always had a thing for art. I guess that's how come he and I hit it off so well.

ELISABETH

When did you meet Michael? When you were in grad school?

MONTE

A little bit before that.

ELISABETH

And he was studying architecture in college?

MONTE

Yeah. From the time I met him. He kicked ass at it.

ELISABETH

I wish I had studied architecture. My father always dissuaded me, which I always found funny because he was an artist.

MONTE

Why did he talk you out of it?

ELISABETH

He said it was a passionate practice that led to nothing but heartache and poverty. Although my parents never wanted for much of anything. He was lucky, I guess.

MONTE

Well, I've always believed you should follow your heart and what's true to you. But aren't you glad to be helping people, as a doctor?

ELISABETH

I wish I could help Michael and Paula. I feel so terrible that they want a child so badly and not I or all the technology and the world can give them what they want.

With guilt in her eyes, Elisabeth stares at the ceiling. Monte puts his arms around her.

MONTE

Ah Liz, some things just weren't meant to be, you know? You did everything you could.

ELISABETH

I just look at our baby and wonder why I can't bring someone like Karl into their lives. Why can't I take care of them in the way they need?

MONTE

Well, I wonder ... why Liz can't stop being so hard on herself. You're a good kid, you know? You just have to realize it more.

He snuggles into her shoulder and drifts off to sleep. Ill at ease, Elisabeth lies awake, staring at the ceiling.

THE IMAGINARY MICHAEL

stares back at her from the ceiling, smirking and making a tsk-tsk motion with his forefinger.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Amid joggers, inline skaters, and cyclists, Monte and Michael are taking a leisurely walk. Monte pushes a stroller containing the baby Karl, who is covered in a blanket.

MONTE

So long time no see, buddy. What's been happening in your life?

MICHAEL

Well, after we came back from China, we started to do some research about overseas adoption.

MONTE

Really? That's great, man. I think that would be good for you and Paula. She cool with it?

MICHAEL

She's the one who suggested it. I thought it was a nice idea.

MONTE

Yeah, well, keep me posted, okay?

Michael nods, and the two men continue to walk. Michael watches Monte's tender treatment of the baby. Monte stops at a bench, sets the baby carriage to the side, and lifts Karl gently from the carriage to feed him a bottle.

Michael spots the BANDAGES on Karl's hands with surprise and curiosity.

MONTE

Ah, it's time to give the big boy some lunch. Mind if we take a breather?

MICHAEL

No, not at all. What happened to Karl's hands?

MONTE

Oh, he was born with a very slight genetic defect on his hands. The surgeons said he had webbed fingers. Elisabeth mentioned her dad was born with that same defect. It's nothing serious.

MICHAEL

Well ... that's good.

Michael looks like he's just realized something horrific. His mouth drops open. He stares at his own hands, which bare slight, barely noticeable scars between his fingers.

Oblivious, Monte continues to feed and dote over baby Karl.

MONTE

The scars should heal by the time he's five, and they won't even be noticeable. I guess they do these surgeries younger and younger. Must have been harder to heal when they used to do those surgeries when kids were older.

MICHAEL

Mmmm-hmmm. Must have been.

Michael looks like he's been hit by a meteor. Clueless to Michael's plight, Monte keeps feeding Karl.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Nervous, Michael drives, his mind clearly racing more than he's paying attention to the road. He nearly sideswipes

ANOTHER CAR

which honks its horn at him.

Michael swerves out of the way, waves his apologies as he snaps to attention.

MICHAEL

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Shaken, he continues to drive.

INT. PAULA AND MICHAEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Paula and Michael eat a late pasta dinner. Paula notices that Michael is clearly ill at ease.

PAULA

You doing okay, honey?

MICHAEL

I'm all right. I'm a little on edge from the drive. I just missed having a collision with someone else on the road.

PAULA

Idiot drivers. Are you all right?

MICHAEL

Yeah, it's nothing, love.

PAULA

So how's Monte doing? Is he adjusting to life with the baby okay?

MICHAEL

Oh, yes. He's quite the proud father. Karl's ... beautiful.

PAULA

Well I'm glad parenthood is treating him well. You know Monte. This is the first time I've seen him doing anything responsible in a long time. That doctor must have really done a number on him.

MICHAEL

Yes. Quite definitely, I'm sure.

Michael gazes at his scarred hands beneath the table, out of Paula's view. Paula smiles, continues to eat.

INT. OB/GYN PRACTICE LOBBY - DAY

Several couples sit in the lobby while MARSHA sits at the receptionist's desk. Wearing his weekday work clothes, Michael walks in and waits until Marsha hangs up.

MARSHA

Yes ... I have you down for a two o'clock appointment tomorrow ... You're welcome ... Bye.

MICHAEL

Excuse me, Marsha, is Doctor Graf in this afternoon?

MARSHA

I'm sorry, she's not. She only works three days a week now because she has a baby at home. How can I help you?

MICHAEL

I was a patient of Doctor Graf's and I would like to speak with a nurse or someone in her labs. Is someone available?

MARSHA

You can try Janice, if she's available. Just go down the hall, to the andrology lab. You can't go inside, but you can call her out.

MICHAEL

Thank you.

He heads in the direction in which Marsha points him.

INT. OB/GYN PRACTICE ANDROLOGY LAB - DAY

Janice works in the lab, cleaning vials and writing down specimen information. Even though the sign on the door clearly reads, "EMPLOYEES ONLY," Michael peeks his head inside.

MICHAEL

Excuse me, are you Janice?

JANICE

Hold on a sec; I'm not supposed to let patients in. I'll be with you in a sec.

She puts down what she's working on and meets Michael at the door.

INT. DOORWAY

Somewhat guardedly, Janice stands in the doorway with Michael.

JANICE

What can I help you with?

MICHAEL

My name is Michael Reilly. I'm not sure if you're permitted to provide this information, but I need to learn more about my sperm samples, such as when they were collected and what specifically they were used for. Can you assist me in any way?

JANICE

I'm not normally allowed to give out that information ... but then again, no one's ever asked me about that kind of stuff before. Usually Doctor Graf covers that information with her clients.

MICHAEL

Well, she told my wife and me that the sperm samples that I provided routinely were used for IUIs for Paula and for testing for a low sperm count.

JANICE

That's right.

MICHAEL

Well, if you don't mind, I would just like to see records of those procedures. You are supposed to have those records on file, yes?

JANICE

Well ... like I said, I'm not normally supposed to give that information out. Medical regulations, you know.

She squirms for a brief moment, then walks to the lab's file cabinets.

JANICE

But you're the patient and you have a right to that information. What's your name again?

MICHAEL

Michael Reilly.

She sifts through the file cabinet's folders and returns with Michael's information, glancing over it a bit.

JANICE

It looks like she had to send a few samples to another lab for further analysis. She told you about the irregularities she found, didn't she?

MICHAEL

No. She did not.

JANICE

She should have.

She gives him the files, which he looks over, somewhat alarmed. His expression as he's reading the files makes her worried.

JANICE

I'm surprised she didn't mention anything. She's usually on the ball about sharing that info with patients.

MICHAEL

What sort of irregularities did she mention?

JANICE

I don't know. I personally didn't see anything wrong, but she decided that she needed to have Guitierrez take a look at them.

MICHAEL

And Guitierrez is that "other lab"?

JANICE

Yes.

MICHAEL

Where is Guitierrez?

JANICE

On Queen Street, on the other side of town.

With a new sense of urgency, Michael hands the files back to Janice.

MICHAEL

Could I ask some favors of you?

JANICE

Sure.

MICHAEL

Could you make me some copies of these, and can I trust you to keep my visit to this lab confidential among you, me, and the receptionist?

JANICE

I can make copies for you, but ...
see, Doctor Graf is my boss --

MICHAEL

I want to be the one to discuss this
with the doctor. If she threatens
retribution for your giving me this
information, I'll take responsibility
and I'll fight her in court if
necessary.

JANICE

God, whatever it is you need this
information for, I hope it doesn't
come to that. Doctor Graf's always
been a good boss to me. But I don't
know why she wouldn't tell you about
the irregularities.

MICHAEL

I don't know either. That is what I
want to find out.

She nods nervously and makes Michael some photocopies.

EXT. QUEEN STREET - DAY

Michael parks his car outside an office building that bears a
Gutierrez Andrology and Urology Services sign. Michael takes
the photocopies out of the car, trots inside.

INT. GUITERREZ LOBBY - DAY

The lobby is clean and Spartan, with only an ATTENDANT sitting
at the front desk's computer. Michael walks up to the
attendant, who turns to greet him.

ATTENDANT

Can I help you?

MICHAEL

Yes, I'm an office assistant for
Doctor Elisabeth Graf, and --

He glances at his photocopies.

MICHAEL

She instructed me to bring her some lab results, but she appears to have misplaced them. I have some copies of the paperwork from her office; could I bring her back some results from this lab?

ATTENDANT

Let me take a look at that paperwork.

Michael gives his copies to the attendant, who reads them over and enters some search information into the computer.

ATTENDANT

I can't find anything on any semen specimens from anyone named Michael Reilly. I have a Michael Radcliffe and a Michael Rodgers from your office. Think she gave you the wrong paperwork?

MICHAEL

Possibly. But Michael Reilly's the patient for whom she needed the results, I'm certain of it.

ATTENDANT

Well, I don't know what to tell you, man. Want to call her?

MICHAEL

For her reference, could you please print out a note on your letterhead saying that there appears to be no record of his specimens on file?

ATTENDANT

If she requires that, sure.

Michael waits as the attendant types up the note.

INT. ELISABETH AND MONTE'S HOUSE/FOYER/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

With baby Karl in his playpen, Elisabeth and Monte, dressed up nicely in evening wear, get Karl's toys and bottles ready for the babysitter.

The doorbell rings, and Monte answers. It's Michael, dressed in casual clothes and carrying his briefcase. Monte and he hug.

MONTE

Hey, man! Good to see you again!

MICHAEL

Same, my good friend. Ready for the big night out?

MONTE

Oh, yeah! We haven't been on a date since the baby was born. What, you're bringing work to do on a Saturday night?

MICHAEL

Yes, I thought I'd do some catch-up work while the baby was sleeping.

ELISABETH

Well, thank you so much, Michael, for volunteering to watch Karl. We could really use the date! So what is Paula doing tonight?

MICHAEL

Ah, she needed a ladies' night with her friends. So this worked out well for both of us.

Elisabeth puts on her earrings as she talks, all smiles.

ELISABETH

So how are you and Paula, Michael?

MICHAEL

Fine, fine. We're both doing well. Thank you for asking.

Keeping up the friendly, casual act, he sets down his briefcase next to a foyer stand and picks Karl up.

MICHAEL

So, how's this young man doing?

ELISABETH

He is growing quickly! Pretty soon he will be walking, and Monte and I will both have our hands full!

MONTE

Well, thanks a million, man. You know, I had to talk Elisabeth into taking a break; she's just a natural mom! Your babysitting's a big help.

MICHAEL

That's not a problem, my friend. I'm happy to do the favor.

MONTE

Well, honey, we've gotta get going if we're going to make our reservation. Are you ready?

ELISABETH

Yes, yes, I suppose. I left you a list with all the phone numbers and Karl's feeding times on the counter. If you need anything, I wrote my cell phone down too. Please call us for anything.

MONTE

Lizzie, Michael will be cool. You ready? Be cool, Michael. Just think of it as practice for when you and Paula adopt.

ELISABETH

Yes, I'm coming. We'll see you later, Michael.

MICHAEL

Have a good night.

After they give Karl his kisses, Monte and Elisabeth leave. Michael sets Karl back in his playpen, picks up his briefcase, sits down with it at a coffee table.

Just as he starts to open it, the door OPENS. Michael slams the briefcase shut and stands up.

Elisabeth walks back in. She looks a bit worried.

MICHAEL

Forget something?

ELISABETH

I forgot to tell you something. Monte thought it was self-explanatory, but I just wanted to tell you that you could help yourself to whatever food or drinks you can find in the kitchen.

MICHAEL

Well, thank you. I think I'm all right for now, but I appreciate the offer.

ELISABETH

My pleasure. Also ... I just wanted to know. I hope I am not being intrusive, but ... are you sure everything is all right?

MICHAEL

Yes. Everything's fine. I was just getting ready to do some work, now that Karl's going back to playing for a bit.

ELISABETH

All right. Please do call if you need anything.

MICHAEL

I will do. Have a good time, and don't worry. I'll take good care of Karl.

ELISABETH

Thank you. We'll see you soon.

She leaves. Michael breathes a sigh of relief, waiting until he hears the car drive off o.s. before opening the briefcase again.

When he opens the briefcase, he takes out a home paternity test kit including a swab, sterile container, and instructions.

He opens the instructions and reads over them before walking over to Karl with the swab, inserting it into Karl's mouth.

MICHAEL

Here you go, little man. This won't hurt a bit.

Michael takes the swab out of Karl's mouth and puts it into the container, putting both the container and instructions back into his briefcase.

Oblivious, Karl babbles happily, returning to playing with his baby toys.

INT. MOLECULAR DIAGNOSTICS OFFICE - DAY

In his work clothes, Michael brings his briefcase to the front desk. He takes out the swab sample and gives it to the front desk person.

MICHAEL

Hello, I'm here to submit a completed motherless paternity test kit for DNA analysis.

FRONT DESK PERSON

I'll take that. You should get the results within five to seven business days.

MICHAEL

I included my work number; it's a direct line. Please call that number during normal office hours.

FRONT DESK PERSON

We will.

He snaps his briefcase shut and leaves, a worried look on his face.

INT. MICHAEL'S WORK OFFICE - DAY

With his door closed, Michael does an Internet search on the name "Karl Graf." At first, he comes up with a couple of birth announcements on local papers for Monte and Elisabeth's own baby Karl Graf Parisi.

As he sifts through some of the other Web entries, however, he uncovers sites dealing with Karl Graf, whose photos on the Web sites bear a striking resemblance to Michael.

Amazed, Michael reads some of the sites.

Visible on the Web sites are some quotes, in English and German (which Michael diligently translates with a Web translator).

INSERT: SERIES OF WEB QUOTES IN ENGLISH

- 1) "... Karl Graf, emotionally tormented artist, encouraged his daughter to pursue a 'less painful' career choice than artistic endeavours ..."
- 2) "... surrealist Karl Graf's artwork is displayed at a permanent exhibition in the Louvre ..."
- 3) "... committed suicide in his home. The 54-year-old widower is survived by a daughter, Elisabeth, who is fourteen and now in the care of family friends ..."

END INSERTS

The last entry catches Michael's interest. He notices the PICTURE that accompanies it, of his likeness with a child version of Elisabeth hugging him.

A cell phone rings while Michael eyes the photo. Still looking at the photo, he picks up.

MICHAEL

Michael Reilly.

LAB PERSON (V.O.)

Mr. Reilly, we have the motherless DNA test results for you and the other specimen. The test results are positive.

MICHAEL

Positive. Are you absolutely sure?

LAB PERSON (V.O.)

Sir, the results are guaranteed at a ninety-nine-point-nine accuracy rate, so I would say yes.

MICHAEL

Thank you. Can I pick up a certified copy of the results?

LAB PERSON (V.O.)

Anytime during normal office hours. Do you have any other questions?

MICHAEL

No. Thank you again.

He trembles in an enormous state of shock, hangs up.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Amid a crowd of people returning home from a workday, Michael walks as if he's in a haze. He carries a smoothie-to-go with him, but barely drinks it.

Walking past a city parking lot, Michael realizes that he's walked right past his own car. He fumbles for his keys and opens his car door. He gets in the car and peels out.

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

The door is shut and the light is at a dim setting. Michael, ill at ease, sits at his desk talking on the phone.

MICHAEL

No, I prefer to remain anonymous ...
I just want to learn what legal recourse I would have in a situation like this...No, not yet. This is something I'm going to have to discuss with my wife... well, thank you. I appreciate your speaking with me at this time of night...Same to you, thank you.

He hangs up with a sigh. His eyes catch

A WEDDING PHOTO OF MICHAEL AND PAULA

He picks up the framed photo and holds it for a while.

Dressed in a suit, with a "Hi! My name is Paula" sticker on her jacket's lapel, Paula walks in, gives him a hug and kiss.

PAULA

Hey, honey.

MICHAEL

Hello there, love. How'd the trade show go? Did you make any sales?

PAULA

Eh, it went okay, except there was this one guy who came to our booth and kept going on and on about his custody battles with his ex -- my God, it reminded of me of what Monte went through with his ex. Please promise me we'll never have to sue anybody. Lawsuits sound like a pain in the ass.

MICHAEL

Well ... I don't know if I can guarantee that.

His serious tone turns Paula's jovial mood to one of concern. She sits down at a computer chair next to him.

PAULA

What do you mean by that?

MICHAEL

Paula. There's something I discovered about our old doctor that I need to tell you.

PAULA

What is it?

INT. MICHAEL AND PAULA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Michael sits shit-faced at the table with a brandy glass and a half-empty bottle of cognac.

Drunker than Michael, Paula sits next to him, pops open a bottle of Crown Royal and pours herself a full glass.

PAULA

Well, holy shit! It figures that she's the one who ends up with your baby! I'm telling you! I can't wait to sue her ass in court! The nerve of her!

MICHAEL

I've been talking with a couple of good lawyers. They say we have a solid case against her. It's not the case that would bother me. It's Monte.

PAULA

Oh, and there's another beautiful situation! This whole time, she's been using Monte to cover her ass. I need another drink!

MICHAEL

Maybe you should take it easy on the Crown Royal, love.

PAULA

Don't mind if I steal some of your Hennessy, then.

She downs her Crown Royal and pours herself a full glass of Michael's cognac. She wraps her arms around Michael, buries her head in his shoulder.

PAULA

Oh, Michael, I'm going to be sick.

MICHAEL

Must have been all the drinking we've been doing, love.

PAULA

How could she ever do this to us?

They give each other a sad hug.

INT. OB/GYN PRACTICE LOBBY - DAY

Elisabeth flips through some files casually as she approaches Marsha's receptionist desk. Marsha hands her a stack of mail.

MARSHA

Here's today's mail. We have a couple of new patients today, so I'm going to have them fill out the necessary paperwork before they see you.

ELISABETH

That is fine, Marsha. Thank you.

She flips through the mail to find a COURT SUMMONS among the different mailings.

She turns away from Marsha to conceal the summons, then reads it with growing bewilderment. She then looks up at Marsha with worry in her eyes.

ELISABETH

Oh, Marsha...when did this arrive?

MARSHA

I'm not sure, Doctor. I haven't had time to read any of it today.

ELISABETH

That's fine.

She conceals the summons in her clipboard and heads off.

INT. BACK OFFICE - DAY

She finds another DOCTOR and consults with her.

ELISABETH

Listen. I was wondering if you could take some of my new patients today. I just got a call from my nanny and she says that Karl is sick.

DOCTOR

No problem. My schedule's light today
and I should be able to handle it.

ELISABETH

Thanks.

DOCTOR

Hope your baby feels better.

Elisabeth heads off.

EXT. ELISABETH AND MONTE'S HOUSE - DAY

Wearing his business clothes, Michael stops his car in
Elisabeth and Monte's driveway, where only Monte's car is
visible. TWO LAWYERS accompany him.

All three men get out of the car, walk to the front door,
knock on it.

LAWYER 1

Are you sure you're up for this,
Michael?

MICHAEL

Ready as I'll ever be, God willing. I
still don't know how in God's name
I'm going to break this to Monte.

LAWYER 2

The hard way, probably.

LAWYER 1

Let's do it, then.

They RING the front doorbell. A stunned Monte answers it.

MONTE

She's gone.

MICHAEL

Gone? Gone where?

MONTE

I don't know. She took Karl and just
left. Who the hell are these guys?

MICHAEL

My lawyers. Monte -- I don't know how to tell you this --

MONTE

What the hell are you bringing lawyers here for?

MICHAEL

I'll explain in a second. Did she say where she was going?

He pushes past Monte. The lawyers follow him inside.

MONTE

She didn't say, Michael, but -- hold the freaking phone. What's the deal with the lawyers?

Michael gives Monte a sad look, shakes his head. He's at a complete loss for words.

INT. MONTE AND ELISABETH'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

In one beat, and before Monte can say anything, Michael sets the briefcase on a nearby end table, flips it open, and retrieves a stack of papers showing the sample retrieval dates from the OB/GYN's lab and also the missing document proof from the Guterrez lab.

MONTE

Michael, do you mind explaining to me just what the hell is going on?

LAWYER 2

When did she leave?

MONTE

Who are you people?

LAWYER 1

Was there trouble in your marriage?

MONTE

It's none of your damn business. Why the hell do you want to know?

MICHAEL

Because they want to help us. I'm sorry I have to let you know this under these circumstances, but believe me, this whole mess was a shock to me as well.

MONTE

What whole mess?

One by one, he shows the papers to Monte. It takes a while for it all to sink in, but gradually the color drains out of Monte's face.

MONTE

You're shitting me.

MICHAEL

I wish I were, my friend.

MONTE

And ... that's why these guys are here?

The two lawyers give each other glib looks, then stare at Monte and nod.

MICHAEL

Sorry, I forgot to introduce you. This is Scott Crane, and this is Rob Liebermann.

MONTE

Uh...nice to meet you. I guess.

Still stunned, Monte shakes each of the lawyers' hands.

MONTE

I think I need a drink. Or to puke. Or to shoot myself.

MICHAEL

Look, Monte. You and I can sue Elisabeth to the maximum extent of her property value, strip her M.D. license, drive her practice into the

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

ground, and force her to lose custody of Karl. Property theft, medical malpractice, personal infringement, punitive charges, not to mention the fact that to commit such a crime as this would merit her an unfit parent, because mentally --

MONTE

As long as we find her first. But ... this makes me not Karl's parent? Legally?

Monte's shocked demeanor suddenly turns crestfallen. Michael notices this, and pats his shoulder.

MICHAEL

Monte ... we can work something out. I know how much you've invested in Karl's upbringing. I don't want to take that away from you. But first we have to figure out where Karl is. And Elisabeth.

MONTE

I don't know. I came home from work last night and they were gone. Just gone. She left a note. That's all I know. It's on the counter. Kitchen.

MICHAEL

I'll get it.

Giving Monte's shoulder a friendly pat, Michael runs off to get the letter. Oblivious to the two lawyers pacing around uncomfortably, Monte picks up one of Karl's toys, holds it.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Michael notices the letter on the kitchen counter. He grabs and heads back to the living room, reading it.

MICHAEL

I found it. Good Christ. She is completely out of her mind.

MONTE

God knows where she's gone.

MICHAEL

We've got to find her. Report her to the police.

MONTE

All right.

Sadly, Monte places the toy he's been holding on the counter top. Michael picks up the phone and begins to dial.

INT. MICHAEL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The office is dark and empty, save Michael's lonely work at his keyboard. When his cell phone rings, he picks up.

MICHAEL

Michael Reilly ... Hey, honey ... No, nothing yet. No sign of her. Or Karl ... As well as can be expected, I guess. I haven't talked with him today. I'm just finishing up my monthly report; then I'll be home, okay? ... Love you too.

He hangs up, saves his document, and then shuts down his computer.

EXT. SMOOTHIE SHOP - NIGHT

The street on which the smoothie shop sits is brightly decorated with Christmas lights and street tinsel. Even the smoothie shop itself advertises its healthy "Santa Special." Michael heads inside.

INT. SMOOTHIE SHOP - NIGHT

Donny greets him with a smile and a ready-made smoothie. Michael sits down and stirs it.

MICHAEL

You always know the good smoothies to make, you know that, Donny?

DONNY

That's my job. You all right?

MICHAEL

Eh, just got a lot to sort out. You know, work. So what are you doing for the holidays? Anything planned?

DONNY

My son-in-law and his family are taking over the shop for two weeks. I'm going home for the holidays.

MICHAEL

Good for you. I know you haven't seen your family for a while. What's it been, three years?

DONNY

Four. Too long. Family's always got to come first in your life, you know? I got to make it so.

MICHAEL

You're a good man, Donny. I'll see you tomorrow.

He slurps down his smoothie, leaves his money on the counter, and leaves.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The parking lot is empty, save Michael's car and a large SUV. Michael sets his briefcase down on the pavement to fish in his pocket for his keys.

Unable to find them right away, he sets his wallet on top of his car to help uncover his keys. He finally finds them, but unknown to him,

ELISABETH

appears from behind the SUV and sneaks upon him from behind. No sooner does Michael get his key in his lock than Elisabeth thrusts an injection in his side. He drops his keys and fights.

MICHAEL

What in the name of -- Shit!

Though he gives a good struggle for a moment, he falls forward clumsily, unconscious, into Elisabeth's arms. Struggling somewhat under his weight, Elisabeth drags him toward the SUV.

Looking around to ensure that no one sees her, she unlocks and opens the back cab and pushes Michael inside. In a car seat, oblivious, Karl babbles away in the back passengers' seat.

ELISABETH

We're almost ready to go, Karl. Hang on tight.

She closes the cab's doors and hops in the driver's seat. Unnoticed, the SUV slips away.

INT. LAKEFRONT HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

A huge picture window opens up to a desolate, steely lake surrounded by evergreens. Elisabeth washes dishes at a small kitchenette while she keeps an eye on baby Karl, who's playing in a playpen with his toys, as well as

MICHAEL,

who sleeps in a Hospice-like hospital bed propped against one wall of the living room. His hair is a little too neatly combed, and he wears hospital pajamas. An IV drips fluid into his arm.

ELISABETH

finishes her dishes, goes into the living area, pats Karl's head. She turns on some light classical music and leans over Michael. She touches his face and forehead, checks the fluid level on his IV.

Michael wakes up, groggy at first. He looks at his surroundings and bed; then jolts wide awake at discovering himself in a strange place.

ELISABETH

Don't, Michael. You will be all right. You just cannot move for a little while.

MICHAEL

What?! Where in God's name am I?

ELISABETH

You are hurt. You just need to rest.

MICHAEL

What? How am I hurt?

ELISABETH

Lie back down, now. I am here to take care of you.

She gives him a gentle shove back down on the bed. He resists her and tries to get up, but collapses in pain, yells out, clutches his stomach.

Startled, Karl drops his toys and cries. Elisabeth rushes to pick him up.

ELISABETH

There, there, mein schatze. Daddy is going to be all right.

MICHAEL

What the ... what the bloody hell?

He peels his pajama top away from his abdomen to reveal a series of long bandages. Shocked, he starts to pry away the bandages, revealing some deep knife wounds and stitches.

With Karl in one arm, Elisabeth forces the bandages shut, injects him with a sedative.

ELISABETH

Don't touch that. Back to sleep you go. I will take care of you till the end of time.

MICHAEL

No, no. I can't be here! Elisabeth, you've gone mad. What the hell have you done to my body? What the --

He loses consciousness again, fading into his pillow. Propping baby Karl next to her, Elisabeth nurtures Michael, smoothing out his hair.

INT. POLICE STATION WAITING AREA - DAY

Paula and Monte sit on the edge of their chairs, hold hands without a word. When a POLICE OFFICER comes in, they both jump to their feet.

PAULA AND MONTE

Have you heard anything? ... What have you found out? ... Any news?

POLICE OFFICER

No, I'm afraid not. The last person who claims having seen him said he left the smoothie shop at around ten after nine. No one's come forward about the parking lot.

PAULA

But he left his keys. Or he dropped them.

MONTE

Or someone left them there on purpose.

PAULA

She took him. I know that bitch had to have taken him. I just can't believe no one saw her do it. Or saw where they went.

POLICE OFFICER

Well, right now, we are indeed treating this as an abduction. It's highly unlikely that an adult male would voluntarily skip town with no vehicle, no keys, no wallet --

MONTE

Or no note. Well, at least we know she hasn't left the country.

PAULA

At least not until two nights ago. Good God, they could be anywhere.

POLICE OFFICER

Mister Parisi, has your wife tried withdrawing any money from your bank account, used any credit cards, made any telephone calls that you know of?

MONTE

No. Not that I've seen online or on our statements or anything.

POLICE OFFICER

All right. We'll need you to supply us with any relatives or contacts on whom you think your wife might be relying for safe houses.

MONTE

I don't know of any off-hand. She never spoke of any of her family in Germany. She told me they were dead.

POLICE OFFICER

Coworkers, colleagues, friends, anyone then.

PAULA

So you think it's her too, then?

POLICE OFFICER

Well, given she's already evading the law on account of the malpractice suit your husband and you have against her, she's already a criminal.

MONTE

Damn straight she's a criminal.

POLICE OFFICER

Given that most abduction victims know their captors, it's a safe bet that she's at least a prime suspect.

PAULA

But why would she want Michael? She's already got Karl.

MONTE

I think that's why she wanted Karl.
She wanted Michael first.

PAULA

But why now?

POLICE OFFICER

Given all you've told me, I'd say
it's because she's a fugitive and she
has nothing to lose. Except your
husband.

PAULA

Oh, God ... I just hope she doesn't
do anything crazy. Crazier.

Monte gives her a hug. She starts to cry.

INT. LAKEFRONT HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

The living room is barren and quiet. Groggy, Michael stirs
awake from his drugged-up slumber. He opens his eyes to catch
a blurry view of

A BOOK

on the kitchen counter across from his bed. The book is an
antique textbook about lobotomies and administering them.

MICHAEL

Shocked, he sits up with great effort, yanks the IVs out of
his arm. With a painful cringe, he stumbles out of the
hospital bed and crawls on the floor. He looks all around him.

KITCHEN COUNTER - KNIFE BLOCK

Michael spots the knife block on the kitchen counter. He
stands up weakly, limps toward the knife block, pulls out a
cleaver.

No sooner than he picks up the knife, Elizabeth stabs him with
a hypodermic needle full of a sedative. In surprise, Michael
drops the knife with a CLANG! to the floor.

ELISABETH

I should know better than to go grocery shopping without giving you something to keep you calm.

MICHAEL

Why ... lobotomy book?

The sedative hits him quickly, and his speech becomes slurred as he fades again into drugged semi-consciousness. Elisabeth props him up on her shoulder and guides him toward his bed.

ELISABETH

Lobotomy is an old practice dating back to the nineteenth century. It was a popular form of psycho-surgery during and immediately after the Second World War, but ceased to be practiced except in rare cases after the early 1950s.

MICHAEL

... know what lobotomies are. Why?

Elisabeth lays him onto his bed like a baby.

ELISABETH

I have to learn how to perform one before Karl is able to walk and talk. He needs to have his father around him always...even if that means his father is vegetative.

MICHAEL

You are ... evil. You're just a sick, sick ...

He falls into a deep sleep, noticing ...

HIS CLOTHES

on hangers in the nearby open COAT CLOSET, before he shuts his eyes.

Elisabeth kisses his forehead, wraps him up in his blankets, and reattaches his IVs. She lifts up baby Karl and cuddles with him; then starts to put away her groceries.

INT. ELISABETH AND MONTE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

A token Christmas tree's lights blink in the b.g. Monte prepares a simple pasta dinner while Paula sits in the breakfast nook sipping on a glass of wine.

PAULA

How long has it been? I can't keep track of the days.

MONTE

Two weeks. And a day.

PAULA

I hope to God she hasn't killed him.

MONTE

Don't say that, Paula. She's probably keeping him as a trophy. It's just a matter of finding him. Both of them.

PAULA

I just wish I knew they were safe. Wherever they are.

Monte finishes cooking and sets two plates down on the breakfast nook table for both Paula and him to eat. He touches her hand.

MONTE

She wouldn't kill them. She's not that crazy.

PAULA

How can you say that after what she's done to you, Monte?

MONTE

Hey, I was married to her. Am married to her. Whatever. I saw her being a mother to Karl. She wouldn't hurt --

Pained, he takes a bite of his pasta, gulps some wine.

MONTE

-- Karl's father.

Now it's Paula's turn to touch Monte's hand.

PAULA

Monte. I really wish we had chosen someone else as a doctor. I hate it that you have to go through this.

MONTE

Eh, what's the difference? It's not your fault. It's also not the first time I've been separated from my kids.

PAULA

I'm so sorry, Monte.

MONTE

I'll live. Let's just focus on getting them home safe, okay?

PAULA

Okay.

They smile at each other with sadness and continue to eat.

INT. LAKEFRONT HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

Snow falls outside the huge picture window, In her pajamas, Elisabeth hangs up Christmas ornaments on a tree. Karl plays nearby with a Santa-in-the-box.

Elisabeth stops what she's doing momentarily to check on Michael, who looks asleep. She checks his pulse and his temperature and gives him a kiss.

ELISABETH

Rest easy, love. And Merry Christmas.
Now, as for you ...

She lifts Karl up and puts him in a playpen.

ELISABETH

... you be good while Mommy's in the shower.

One of Michael's eyelids flies open, but then shuts quickly when Elisabeth turns around. She eyes Michael for a bit and then proceeds to the shower.

When the WATER STARTS RUNNING, Michael sits up as abruptly as he is able to, given the additional wounds that can be seen on his abdomen. He darts for the nearby

COAT CLOSET

pulling on the clothes he was wearing when Elisabeth first kidnapped him. He finds his shoes, throwing them on while glancing at the

MASTER BEDROOM DOOR

to make sure that the water still runs and Elisabeth is in the shower.

He winces and buckles for a moment as he lifts Karl out of his crib, snatches Elisabeth's keys from a nearby key hook, grabs her purse, sneaks out.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

In dismay, Michael bursts outside only to find that a foot of snow blankets the ground.

MICHAEL

Holy shit!

THE HOUSE AND SURROUNDING AREA

is desolate-looking and solitary amid a great field and half-frozen lake. As he balances Karl unsteadily on his sore side, Michael groans.

MICHAEL

Now how the hell are we going to get out of here?

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - DAY

The shower water shuts off and Elisabeth steps out of the shower, humming Christmas carols as she dries herself, throws on a bathrobe, and wraps her hair in a towel turban.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Carrying Karl in his arms and the purse over his shoulder, and trying not to fall over in pain, Michael drags his feet in furious paths up and down the driveway, trying to carve a makeshift path on which to drive out.

MICHAEL

That's the best I can do, little guy.
I hope to God it works.

He struggles to unlock the door of the snow-covered SUV, wincing again in pain. He drops the keys in the snow.

MICHAEL

Piss!

Gritting his teeth to stop himself from screaming, Michael painfully bends over, while balancing Karl, to pick up the keys. After he picks them up, he struggles to open the SUV door.

INTERCUTTING SUV/ELISABETH'S HOUSE - DAY

INT. SUV

After he puts Karl in his carseat, he buckles himself in the driver's seat. He starts the engine, gives it gas to warm it up more quickly.

MICHAEL

All right, Karl ... we're just going
to go on a little ride.

INT. HOUSE MASTER BEDROOM

Elisabeth digs in her dresser drawers for some underwear, socks, jeans, and a sweater.

EXT. SUV

Michael plows the SUV out of the driveway, fishtails as he steers to drive straight. He peels out as he drives off.

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM

Elisabeth puts on her earrings and does her makeup. She is startled when she hears the SUV peel out. She drops what she's doing and runs out of the bedroom.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Discovering that both Michael and Karl are gone, Elisabeth rushes outside.

EXT. HOUSE

Elisabeth reacts, gasps upon seeing that her SUV is gone. She rushes back inside.

INT. SUV - DAY

Michael drives down a desolate two-lane road in the middle of nowhere until he spots the first sign of life, a combination gas station/diner.

MICHAEL

Think we'll find someone in here
who'll help us, little buddy?

He glances behind him at Karl, who sleeps in his carseat.

EXT. GAS STATION/DINER - DAY

After he pulls into a parking spot, Michael gets Karl out of his carseat. He lists in pain, hobbles while he carries Karl toward the front entrance.

TWO FARMER-TYPES in winter gear walk out, eyeing the ashen-faced man in disheveled work clothes and his baby. They speak with Canadian accents.

FARMER-TYPE 1

Now where the hell did you walk out
of, eh?

MICHAEL

Nowhere. Merry Christmas.

The farmer-types stare at Michael and Karl as they walk away. Michael ignores them and limps his way into the gas station.

INT. GAS STATION/DINER - DAY

A small mounted black-and-white TV set blares a local channel. A hardy female CASHIER gives Michael and Karl a sideways glance as Michael stumbles in with his charge.

With one tight arm around Karl, Michael grasps the cashier counter as he cringes in pain.

WOMAN

You sure ain't dressed good for a Merry Christmas. It's a tad chilly for what you're wearing, eh?

MICHAEL

It's very cold out, yes. Listen, I need your help.

WOMAN

Y'look like you're in pretty bad shape, Mister. What kind of help are you looking for now?

Michael unbuttons the bottom half of his shirt, baring his wounds. The woman reacts with shock.

WOMAN

Good Lord Almighty. What in God's name happened to ya?

MICHAEL

Look, I'm hurt. My son and I have been kidnapped, and I need to use your phone so I can contact the police.

WOMAN

My friend, with the looks of your belly there, you're gonna need medical attention.

(pause)

You don't sound like you're from the States. Where are you from?

Michael looks at her dumbly.

MICHAEL

Does it bloody matter where I'm from?
If you need to know, I live in
Chicago, but I'm originally from
Northern Ireland.

WOMAN

You sure don't sound Canadian.

Michael gives her another dumb look. The woman gives him a blank stare in return.

MICHAEL

Canadian?! Wait ... I'm in Canada?!

WOMAN

Jesus Almighty, they must've knocked
you out good before they dragged you
over the border. Whoever "they" is.

MICHAEL

Where the bloody hell in Canada am I?

WOMAN

This is Wynward, Saskatchewan.

MICHAEL

Wynward, Saskatchewan?

Out the window, a POLICE CAR drives up, and TWO ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE (RCMPs) rush out of the vehicle with Elisabeth trailing behind.

Shocked, Michael clasps onto Karl with a tight, protective grip. He points out the window at the group coming toward the building.

MICHAEL

That's the woman who kidnapped us!
That's the woman who did this!

WOMAN

Well, she's the new lady in town.
Been comin' in here for petrol --

The RCMPs and Elisabeth burst into the store. Elisabeth feigns relief and worry as she rushes to Michael and Karl.

Michael backs away, pulls Karl away from her.

ELISABETH

Michael, I was so worried! I had the police looking all over for you! Are you all right?

MICHAEL

Get the hell away from me! You're not taking Karl!

RCMP 1

Sir, you'd best listen to what your wife here is telling you.

Michael's mouth drops open. Elisabeth feigns a taciturn look of concern, crosses her arms.

MICHAEL

Wife?!

ELISABETH

You're going delirious again, sweetheart. The police know all about your condition.

MICHAEL

Condition?! There is no "condition"! She kidnapped me and now she wants to perform a homemade lobotomy!

RCMP 1 grabs Michael while RCMP 2 snatches Karl away and gives him to Elisabeth.

Elisabeth comforts Karl while the policemen handcuff Michael, who struggles despite his pain.

RCMP 1

You're right, Doctor. Your baby does look a lot like your husband.

MICHAEL

Go to hell!

RCMP 2

It's all right, sir. We totally understand. Just cooperate and your wife'll have you home and warm. She gave us your paperwork --

MICHAEL

She's not my wife! The paperwork's got to be fake! She -- she did something horrible to me. I can't even begin to explain --

ELISABETH

Michael, dear Michael, ease up now. Your medicine's wearing off. All we have to do is get you into your bed with some hot soup --

Viciously angry, Michael charges at her with his cuffed hands. The police restrain him.

MICHAEL

Damn you to hell! If it weren't for the baby and these handcuffs, I'd kill you with my bare hands!

RCMP 1

Sir, we'll have to put a straitjacket on you if you can't calm yourself!

MICHAEL

I'm not the one who needs the straitjacket! Doctor -- she's a sorry excuse for a doctor -- Elisabeth's the one who's sick in the head!

ELISABETH

Michael ... I know how much you want your freedom. But this isn't the way to go about acquiring it.

He glances toward the cashier, pleading. Her hands over her mouth, the cashier shrinks behind the counter in fear.

MICHAEL

Please ... you saw what she did to me. I have a wife. Not her. My wife lives in Chicago. This woman ... this woman here stole from me. She stole from me to make the baby. And now she means to steal my life.

ELISABETH

See? He's disoriented, that's all. Let's go home, love. You get depressed every time there's a holiday, and it makes me unhappy.

MICHAEL

You can't do this to me!

From her perch at the counter, the woman watches the RCMPs drag Michael outside. They struggle to force him into the police car as Elisabeth stands off to the side, comforts Karl.

One of the RCMPs grabs a straitjacket and starts to harness Michael in it.

The woman shakes her head and turns her attention to the TV.

WOMAN

You just don't know who to believe anymore. No such thing as small-town honesty these days. Pity shame.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...and in U.S. news today, still no sign of Michael Reilly, his baby, or their captor in that bizarre fertility-doctor kidnapping case. Three weeks after the kidnapping took place, Tampa police are considering expanding the search across the Canadian border in the hopes that ...

The TV monitor displays photos of Michael and Karl. The woman stares at them for a moment in shock.

WOMAN

Well, I'll be damned.

She rushes outside.

EXT. GAS STATION/DINER - DAY

The RCMPs secure the straitjacket on Michael, who still fights to get out of it. He cries out in pain as they shove him into the police car.

INT. POLICE CAR - CONTINUOUS

Still holding Karl, Elisabeth gets into the back seat. She shoots Michael a glare. Michael glares back. The policemen in the front seat start the engine.

EXT. GAS STATION/DINER - CONTINUOUS

The cashier woman stops the police car before it drives off.

WOMAN

Wait! Wait! That man is telling the truth! Wait!

Grumbling, the two policemen get out of the vehicle.

RCMP 1

Now, what's this all about, eh?

WOMAN

Come inside and look! Come and look at the TV!

The RCMPs look at each other, begrudgingly get out of the car, follow the woman back into the gas station/diner.

With a growing expression of panic, Elisabeth holds onto Karl, looks away from Michael. Michael smiles with relief.

INT. GAS STATION/DINER - CONTINUOUS

The cashier points the RCMPs toward the TV. She changes it to another channel with international news. Another shot of Michael appears.

TV ANCHOR (V.O.)

... wife of a kidnapping victim from Chicago, Illinois, pleaded for the return of her husband and his son in what is turning out to be the most bizarre U.S. crime case this holiday season ...

Dumbfounded, the RCMPs stare first at the TV, then at the cashier, then at each other.

EXT. GAS STATION/DINER - CONTINUOUS

The RCMPs approach the car, open the back seat door, peer in at Michael in his straitjacket, Elisabeth, and Karl.

RCMP 1

So. It looks like we might need to bring you both down to the station, so you can tell us what the hell is going on.

RCMP 2

It's more like we need to contact the Chicago police, eh, chief?

Elisabeth gives Michael a guilty look, holds Karl ever more close to her. In his straitjacket, Michael gives her a victorious smirk.

EXT. WASHINGTON STATE FERRY - PUGET SOUND - DAY

The ferry plies across Puget Sound toward Seattle. In business-casual clothes, Michael leans against the guardrail, looking ahead toward the Space Needle.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

After the publicity mess died down and Elisabeth was safely in jail, Paula and I moved to Seattle, where we both secured new jobs and got a fresh start. Most of Paula's family lives in the Pacific Northwest, so it was a blessing for both of us.

INT. SEA-TAC INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

From an international gate with a marquee reading, "Arriving from BEIJING, CHINA," Paula and Michael de-board. Paula carries a CHINESE INFANT while Michael is loaded down with carry-on luggage and a baby travel bag.

PAULA

Have you got everything?

MICHAEL

I think so, honey.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

We adopted a baby girl from China and named her Mia. Mia's now four and a half, and we've recently adopted a baby brother for her from Vietnam.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael stares at the ceiling as he did at the beginning, until he hears the baby's cries. Seeing that Paula is fast asleep, he gets up and puts on his bathrobe.

The hall light turns on. LITTLE MIA, in kids' pajamas, appears in the doorway.

LITTLE MIA

(Daddy. Ronan's crying.)

MICHAEL

(I hear him, sweetheart. Let's go check on him, okay?)

He takes his daughter's hand, walks with her out of the room.

INT. RONAN'S NURSERY - NIGHT

Mia watches with a sweet smile as Michael sits in a feeding chair, feeds BABY RONAN a bottle.

MIA

Can I feed him, Daddy?

MICHAEL

Yes, you may...be careful with his head, now. Be sure not to tilt the bottle too much ... Easy now, sweetheart.

Michael helps Mia get into place on the feeding chair so she can hold and feed the baby.

INT. HOME OFFICE - DAY

While Ronan toddles in his baby walker and BABBLES in the background, Michael checks his e-mail on his home computer. He opens a .jpg attachment in an e-mail from Monte.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Their older brother sometimes helps take care of both of them. In a joint parental arrangement we worked out afterward, Karl shares time between us and Monte.

THE ELECTRONIC PICTURE

is a snapshot at the kids' petting zoo of the family, consisting of Monte, FIVE-YEAR-OLD KARL, and MONTE'S TEENAGED DAUGHTERS. All of the family looks genuinely happy.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Even when Karl is with Monte and his daughters, with whom Monte's since reunited, Monte always manages to take time out of his busy schedule to send photos.

Michael smiles upon seeing the picture. He reads Monte's e-mail message.

INSERT: E-MAIL MESSAGE

Karl says hi to his Dad in Washington!

END INSERT

MICHAEL (V.O.)

It's taken a long while to sort through the mess that Elisabeth made, and for which she's paying in prison. She stole from me and Paula ... probably the worst thing anything can steal from anybody. But God willing, we're all here, and we're living our lives the best we can.

Mia comes in with Paula, taps her dad on the shoulder. Paula and Michael exchange loving smiles.

MIA

Daddy, guess what? Mommy's putting on a yoga tape. Do you want to go do yoga with her?

MICHAEL

Sure, honey. Do you want to keep an eye on Ronan downstairs while we do yoga?

MIA

Can you teach me how to do the tree pose though?

MICHAEL

Sure, sweetie.

Michael picks up Ronan and holds his daughter's hand. Paula grabs Mia's other hand, and the family walks out together.

FADE OUT.

THE END