

Since You've Been Gone

by

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COLD OPENING

FADE IN:

EXT. STARBUCKS PATIO, SIDEWALK - DAY

CLAIRE GOLDMAN (40) lies on her back against the sidewalk. We see only her head and shoulders against the concrete. The fists of an unknown female assailant FLY BY her face and just barely miss their mark.

The feet of those watching the assault are visible, but the noise of their OOHs and AAHs are soon muted by the sound of Claire's inner dialogue.

CLAIRE (V.O.)

Holy shit, that one was close! I've gotta get her in close to me.

More punches follow, with one of them barely grazing the top of her head. She manages to grab one of the hands and then, with effort, the other. She pulls both close to her chest.

CLAIRE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Geez, this is **not** what I thought I'd be doing today. Ugh, I shouldn't have eaten that extra piece of french toast this morning.

With hands contained, the unknown assailant's forearms begin pressing heavily on Claire's throat - breathing is labored.

CLAIRE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

This is not my fault! This is his fault. ... How did this become my life? Whatever.

(a beat)

I gotta handle this, regardless. One thing's for sure - none of these jack-offs watching are gonna help me.

ACT ONE

INT. CLAIRE'S CAR, ON THE ROAD - EARLY MORNING

SUPER: "EARLIER"

Claire drives along sipping a coffee and rocking out to the stereo. She wears the formal uniform of the corporate lawyer gig she's grown accustomed to over the past decade. She spies a strip mall sign - "Katz Brothers Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu."

CLAIRE

(quietly to herself)
Brazilian? ... As opposed to what,
Canadian? Does each country get
their own version? ... Ooh, I
wonder if they have Zoomba.

She turns her attention to the nearby bus stop where JAMIE BUCK (34) stands waiting. She sports a feathered mullet hairdo, a Seinfeld-ish sports coat/sneaker combo, and appears annoyed as Claire pulls up.

JAMIE

(getting in the car)
You know ...

CLAIRE

(interrupting)
What?

JAMIE

I only live a few blocks from here.
You could end this dance and just
pick me up at my apartment.

CLAIRE

Or, you could break down and buy a
car. This **is** Los Angeles.

JAMIE

(pulling something out of
her pocket)
That's no way to treat your best
friend who just got you a really
awesome gift for your birthday.

CLAIRE

Oh yay! What is it? No, wait, you
should leave it until tonight.

JAMIE

What's happening tonight?

CLAIRE
So Grayer hasn't planned a little
something for my fortieth with you?

Jamie shakes her head.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Well, he probably knew you'd tell
me. Remember how awesome my
surprise party for his fortieth
birthday was? What'd ya get me?

JAMIE
(shows them to her)
Read 'em and weep. Two Sizzler
lunch buffet tickets. It's your
special day, buddy.

INT. BIG LAW FIRM OFFICES, CLAIRE'S OFFICE - LATER

Claire plops down at her desk as Jamie examines a photo of
Claire's youthfully handsome husband GRAYER (40). Claire's
door bears her name and her title "Of Counsel".

CLAIRE
(now a bit down)
Forty ... geez. I can't believe it.
Where did the time go? I swear,
something's gotta change.

JAMIE
(still looking at photo)
He is **so** hot. It's hard to believe
he's forty ... perfect skin.

CLAIRE
(puts photo back on desk)
Hey, I used to be the hot one! He
was just this chubby computer nerd
until he started becoming obsessed
with fitness and quit his day job.

JAMIE
I was just kidding ... sorta.
What's going on?

CLAIRE
Oh, I don't know.

Jamie puts her sneakers up on the desk and leans back.

JAMIE

C'mon, let it all out. Hey, you listen to me rate all the attorneys' butts and don't report me to human resources. I can listen to some of your birthday problems.

CLAIRE

Things used to be so great. Everything had a good ... trajectory. Now? I really need to get my shit together.

JAMIE

Well, your shit is starting to take ... form, kinda ...

CLAIRE

(interrupting)

No it isn't. I need to get into shape and then I need to ...

A LOUD KNOCKING as FRANK DAVIS (58) enters with summer associates, JUSTIN and KAYLA. Jamie puts her feet down.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Oh, Mr. Davis, how are you?

FRANK DAVIS

Uh, listen, Clarissa, is it?

CLAIRE

It's Claire, Claire Goldman.

JAMIE

(very softly)

It's on the door.

FRANK DAVIS

Anyway, my paralegal said you might have the Hudson file - do you?

CLAIRE

Yes, do you need it?

FRANK DAVIS

Send a copy to my secretary.

CLAIRE

Sure thing - right away.

FRANK DAVIS

(checking out the office)

Hmm, nice place.

(MORE)

FRANK DAVIS (CONT'D)
(to summer associates)
Let's go.

KAYLA
(whispering too loud to
Justin as they leave)
What does 'of counsel' mean?

JUSTIN
(whispering even louder)
It means it's someone you don't
need to worry about.

INT. CLAIRE'S TOWNHOUSE, KITCHEN - EVENING

A cupcake sits in the middle of the kitchen table. It bears a lit candle in the form of the number forty. Around the table sit Claire, Grayer, and their French bulldog 'Puppy'. They all wear tiny birthday party hats.

CLAIRE
So, a cupcake.

GRAYER
Well, yeah, an **entirely vegan**
cupcake - even the frosting has no
animal products.

CLAIRE
So, a shitty-tasting cupcake?

GRAYER
They're delicious. ... I ate mine.

CLAIRE
This is kind of a milestone
birthday, you know?

GRAYER
Yeah, I know. But I asked if you
wanted a big party and you said no.

CLAIRE
Okay, whatever. Where do you want
to go for dinner?

GRAYER
I've got this meeting at the gym
tonight. I texted you about it.

CLAIRE
Seriously, tonight?

GRAYER

Yeah, it's like a mandatory meeting. I'm sorry. Look, I scored you some spa gift certificates.

(handing them to her)

We'll go to that new sushi place tomorrow night, okay?

CLAIRE

That would actually be kind of nice.

He kisses her on the top of the head, they hug, and he leaves. She licks the frosting and makes a face.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

(to herself softly)

I'd rather go to Golden Corral.

INT. BIG LAW FIRM OFFICES, HALLWAY NEAR CLAIRE'S OFFICE - MORNING

Claire and Jamie arrive at Claire's office. There's a lot of hustle and bustle. Kayla and Justin are loading boxes into her office. Nearby stands the office manager, VICKIE.

CLAIRE

Vickie, what the hell's going on?

VICKIE

Frank told me the summer associates needed this office immediately.

KAYLA

(overhearing)

You don't understand. Justin and I have been having to do our work **literally** in the firm library since we got here.

JUSTIN

And we have been putting in some killer hours!

CLAIRE

How long have you two been here?

KAYLA

Three whole weeks. It's like we don't even have personal lives anymore!

VICKIE
 (apologetically)
 We've put together a new office for
 you just down the hall.

Vickie leads Claire and Jamie to her new digs. It's the size of a broom closet - no window and mismatched cheap furniture.

JAMIE
 Are you fucking serious?

VICKIE
 (to Claire)
 I'm sorry, it's all I can do right
 now. I'll let you know if something
 else becomes available.

Vickie leaves as Claire and Jamie stand there, stunned.

CLAIRE
 I've got to get out of here... get
 some coffee or something.

JAMIE
 They could've at least given you a
 shitty vegan cupcake.
 (a beat)
 Go on, get out. I'll try to do
 something with this mess.

INT. CLAIRE'S CAR, ON THE ROAD, NEAR HOME - A LITTLE LATER

Claire munches on a full bag of potato chips and swills a Big Gulp as she again spies the "Katz Brothers Brazilian Jiu Jitsu" sign.

She pulls into her townhouse driveway. There is a Vespa Scooter parked there alongside Grayer's car.

INT. CLAIRE'S TOWNHOUSE, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Claire walks in and hears music. Puppy is cowering on the sofa as the music and human sounds get louder. She sets down the Big Gulp and picks up Puppy, walking to the bedroom.

The sounds grow louder and are clearly sexual. She opens the door. A very buff woman, LEXI COOK (25), is on top of Grayer and they both climax right before noticing Claire and Puppy.

GRAYER
 (meeting eyes with Claire)
 Oh shit.

Lexi adroitly dismounts Grayer and stands next to the bed putting on her sports bra and shorts. She grins right at Claire, looking through her - she's tall and ripped.

Claire stands like a deer in the headlights as Lexi struts over to the doorway and gives Claire a short head flex feint. Claire flinches as Lexi takes a chip from the bag and leaves, still grinning. Grayer sits with his head in his hands.

GRAYER (CONT'D)
Damn it ... damn it.

Claire appears emotionless and crunches a chip loudly. She turns to leave with Puppy and her chips in tow.

GRAYER (CONT'D)
(weakly)
Don't ... please don't go.

INT. CLAIRE'S CAR, ON THE ROAD - A LITTLE LATER

Claire drives in a daze as Puppy puts her head out the window and enjoys the wind. She passes the Jiu-Jitsu sign. She hangs a u-turn and pulls into the strip mall parking lot.

INT. KATZ JIU-JITSU, FRONT DESK - MOMENTS LATER

The desk is staffed by TEDDY KELLY (27), a skinny, bearded, hippie type, and JEREMY SCHWARTZ (39), who has kind eyes and a good chin. They wear traditional gis and sport blue belts. Some students are warming up and drilling techniques nearby.

CLAIRE
(still in a daze)
So, what's this all about?

TEDDY
(a little stoned)
I like your directness ma'am.

CLAIRE
Please don't call me ma'am.

JEREMY
I'm Jeremy and this is Teddy.
What's your name?

CLAIRE
Claire ... Claire Goldman.

JEREMY
Cool, a member of the tribe.

CLAIRE

Huh?

JEREMY

Oh, I'm Jewish too. Jeremy Schwartz. We have no idea what Teddy's ethnicity is ...

TEDDY

(interrupting)

I'm a citizen of the world, my good man. ... I'll get her a gi.

JEREMY

Is that okay? Do you want to try a lesson? First time is free.

She pauses, thoughtfully, as Teddy locates a gi.

CLAIRE

Yeah sure. Why not?

She takes the gi from Teddy and gives him Puppy to hold.

INT. KATZ JIU-JITSU, THE MATS - A LITTLE LATER

Claire makes her way to the mats in her gi and is met by Jeremy and BENJAMIN KATZ (42) - he looks every inch the master martial artist, but has a relaxed manner about him.

JEREMY

Claire, this is Benjamin, he's the owner and head instructor.

CLAIRE

Hi.

BENJAMIN

You're gonna love training here. This class is actually taught by my brother, but let me fix that belt.

He deftly ties her belt into a nice square knot. She bows.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Eh, we don't really do that here. I mean, you can if you want, but you don't have to. You do need to take off that ring though - you don't want to get de-gloved.

CLAIRE
(taking ring off)
De-gloved? What's that?

JEREMY
You don't wanna know right now.
Google it later.

Claire is nonplussed and dramatically tosses her wedding ring into a nearby trash bin as Jeremy and Benjamin watch in awe.

CLAIRE
(smiling)
Let's do this.

They walk to the main mat as Teddy stealthily saunters over to the trash bin with Puppy and fishes out the ring.

INT. KATZ JIU-JITSU, MAIN MAT - BRIEF MONTAGE SEQUENCE

-- BILLY KATZ (36) - a smaller, more lithe version of his brother, leads the class in warm ups; Claire struggles.

-- Claire partners with a purple belt prodigy, JESSICA MERCER (17), on an agility drill. She continues to struggle, but Jessica appears to be patient and helpful.

-- Jeremy notices Claire's trouble and gives her a little wink of encouragement from across the mat.

INT. KATZ JIU-JITSU, MAIN MAT - LATER

BILLY
Let's roll. Everybody partner up.

Claire looks at Jessica, puzzled as to what to do.

JESSICA
We do live grappling; one partner
after another. It's no big deal.

Jessica shows Claire a 'starting' fist bump move and they begin to grapple. Jessica easily gets on top of Claire and puts her, gently, into an arm bar.

CLAIRE
Ahhh! That's gonna hurt if you go
any further with it.

JESSICA

Oh, if you feel something hurt or choking you then you just submit by tapping me or the mat or just saying 'tap tap.' Sorry, we should have showed you that right off.

CLAIRE

Oh, okay. Just a tap.

They roll around some more and a BUZZER SOUNDS.

BILLY

Okay, change partners.

INT. KATZ JIU-JITSU, MAIN MAT - BRIEF MONTAGE SEQUENCE

-- Claire rolls with a large male student and struggles.

-- She changes partners and rolls with Jeremy. She's getting very winded, but he's helpful and mainly just shows her what to do rather than really live grappling.

-- She changes partners and rolls with a very heavy male student. He goes easy, but he still squashes her.

INT. KATZ JIU-JITSU, MAIN MAT - LATER

Claire is exhausted and bent over, breathing heavily. She's approached by a tiny white belt, OLEG STRAVSKY (30).

CLAIRE

(whispering to herself)
Oh, thank god, a little break.

OLEG

(thick Russian accent)
Hello, I am Oleg. We roll?

He's only up to her nose and can't weigh over 100 pounds.

CLAIRE

Absolutely. Oh, what are those little stripes on your belt?

OLEG

Oh, it means closer to blue belt. I work very hard. They like that.

CLAIRE

Well, alrighty then.

They bump fists and begin. Oleg appears surprisingly strong. Claire finds herself in submission after submission and gets quite good at tapping by the time the BUZZER SOUNDS.

BILLY

Change partners - final roll!

Oleg and Claire shake hands and he moves along. She is approached by a grey haired white belt, JANET TATE (53), who seems to be about as winded as Claire. Like Oleg, she has several stripes on her belt.

JANET

Hi, I'm Janet.

CLAIRE

I'm Claire. Oh, you have stripes too. Oleg just told me about those. How long have you been doing this?

JANET

Oh, about nine or ten months. My boyfriend practically lives here so if I wanna see him I had to start.

They both LAUGH a little as the BUZZER SOUNDS.

CLAIRE

Oh, which one is your boyfriend?

JANET

The blue belt over there, Jeremy.

CLAIRE

(a bit stunned but hiding
it well)

Oh, okay. I guess we should roll, right?

They fist bump and begin grappling. Claire does a bit better, but experience triumphs and Janet soon gets on top and stays there. The BUZZER SOUNDS and they get up and shake hands.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Whew, that's a workout.

JANET

You got that right.

They're approached by Billy and Jeremy.

BILLY

Well Claire, how'd you like the workout?

JEREMY
Care to join our little crew?

CLAIRE
I'm in!

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. CLAIRE'S TOWNHOUSE, KITCHEN - EVENING

Claire enters and glances at a brief note left by Grayer on the kitchen table. She gets Puppy some food and herself some leftovers and white wine from the refrigerator.

She pops open her laptop and begins eating. An INSERT reveals she's watching interspersing Youtube videos on Jiu Jitsu history, technique, and philosophy.

INT. CLAIRE'S TOWNHOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The 'party' has moved to the sofa where Claire continues to watch Youtube videos and drink wine. As Puppy nuzzles her, she falls to sleep.

INT. CLAIRE'S TOWNHOUSE, BEDROOM - DREAM WITHIN A DREAM SEQUENCE

Claire kicks down the bedroom door where she finds Grayer and Lexi in bed. She jumps on top of Lexi, gets her in a 'Hollywood' wrestling hold, and body slams her on the bed.

As Lexi cries out, Claire picks her up and comically throws her out the window. Grayer looks on admiringly. But then, her body starts to oddly SHAKE.

INT. CLAIRE'S TOWNHOUSE, BEDROOM - 'REAL' DREAM SEQUENCE

Claire is being JOSTLED and SHOOK by Grayer who is next to her under the covers in their bed.

CLAIRE
(groggy, waking up)
Wha? What happened?

GRAYER
Do you mind moving over some? I
mean, we're trying to fuck here.

He pulls back the covers to reveal Lexi naked next to him on his other side.

INT. CLAIRE'S TOWNHOUSE, LIVING ROOM - BACK TO REAL TIME

Claire BOLTS awake and spills some wine that's next to her.

CLAIRE

Good lord, what time is it?

(checks her phone)

Puppy, we've got to get to bed.

(weakly)

Geez, that dream was going so great. What the hell happened?

INT. CLAIRE'S CAR, ON THE ROAD - MORNING

Claire and Jamie are near the office and mid-conversation.

JAMIE

I'd kick his ass to the curb and throw all of his shit out on the lawn. That's what I'd do.

CLAIRE

Well, he took most of his stuff already. I don't know, I think ...

JAMIE

(interrupting)

Wait, I'd have sex with him one last time for sure ... Then I'd kick his ass to the curb.

CLAIRE

Are ya done?

They pull into the office parking lot and undo their belts.

JAMIE

Yeah, sorry.

CLAIRE

It wasn't always like this. Things used to be great. It only started going south a couple years ago.

JAMIE

This has been going on for a couple years?

CLAIRE

Not the cheating, I mean the lack of ... you know ... romance.

She gets a TEXT BEEP from her phone.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
I gotta answer this text. We'll
talk about it later, okay?

JAMIE
Yeah, sure. Just remember - get one
last bang - very important.

Jamie leaves. An INSERT shows it's a text from Grayer.

GRAYER (TEXT)
Lunch? I'd really like to talk.

Claire begins to text:

CLAIRE (TEXT)
I'd love that. Puppy misses you. I
miss you even more. I hope ...

She deletes that text language and replaces it.

CLAIRE (TEXT) (CONT'D)
Tomorrow at the Market Cafe. Noon.

She puts her phone in her pocket and catches up to Jamie.

INT. KATZ JIU-JITSU, MAIN MAT - EVENING

Claire and Jessica drill a technique along with the other students as Benjamin monitors their progress. At the other end of the mat, Janet and Jeremy are into some UNINTELLIGIBLE QUIBBLING, which briefly distracts Claire and Jessica.

JESSICA
Anyway, my dad used to train. He
got his blue belt at the same time
Jeremy got his - they're BFFs but
would never admit it.

CLAIRE
But then he quit?

JESSICA
For now. He's really got his hands
full since he and my mom split.

CLAIRE
Oh, I'm sorry.

JESSICA
It's no biggie. They get along most
of the time.

(MORE)

JESSICA (CONT'D)

She's just really passionately into her causes and protests and he's just ... I guess, into being a suburban dad and work and stuff.

(laughs)

He's so reliable he's boring.

CLAIRE

But you two get along?

JESSICA

Oh yeah, he's cool and all. He's teaching me to drive.

CLAIRE

You're a senior and you don't drive yet?

JESSICA

Almost no one in my class does. That's what my dad's for ... and Uber of course.

A BUZZER SOUNDS and they take a break from drilling. More UNINTELLIGIBLE QUIBBLING is going on between Jeremy and Janet. They turn to take it in as Teddy approaches them.

TEDDY

Hey Claire, some of us are going to karaoke after class. Wanna come?

CLAIRE

Yeah, sure.

JESSICA

What about me?

TEDDY

But they serve alcohol.

JESSICA

They serve food too. I'm not a leper because I'm seventeen.

TEDDY

Uh, yeah, I guess so. Ooh, bring your dad. He's awesome.

JESSICA

Whatever.

INT. KARAOKE BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

The Katz group members are assembled together near the front of the stage. Teddy renders an impressive version of the Divinyls' "I Touch Myself" that really wows the crowd, although everyone also seems a little uncomfortable.

In the corner of the room Jeremy pounds tequila shots while Janet stews. Meanwhile, Claire joins the group and takes a seat next to Billy.

CLAIRE

What's going on over there?

BILLY

It's been kinda tense. To answer your question, I don't know, exactly. Janet runs some restaurants and it keeps her pretty busy. Jeremy works part-time for me and does some other odd jobs and really enjoys his fun.

(smiles)

Now you know what I know.

They turn their attentions to the stage where Benjamin has begun singing his rendition of G. Strait's "The Chair."

BILLY (CONT'D)

Oh, good lord, not this again.

CLAIRE

Does he sing this one a lot?

BILLY

More than once is too much.

(a beat)

I'm gonna hit the restroom.

Over in the corner things have heated up.

JEREMY

(slightly slurred)

Why? It's still early.

JANET

Some of us don't have the luxury of having ...

(editing herself)

You know what, just forget it.

JEREMY

What?

Janet gives him the 'talk to the hand' move and leaves. He grabs his beer and walks toward the group.

Benjamin hits the final verses of his song as Billy meanders back to the group - but Jeremy beats him to the open chair. He plops down next to Claire and, in a graceful move belying his intoxicated state, kisses her very gently.

After a few seconds, she pushes him away, gently but purposively.

CLAIRE

Jeremy, c'mon, that's crazy, no.

JEREMY

Oh my god. What have I done? I am so sorry.

CLAIRE

It's ...

Jeremy bolts out of the room and Billy approaches.

BILLY

Are you okay?

CLAIRE

Let's not let it make the night weird ... really. Hey, you and me - let's do a duet.

BILLY

You got it. So ... Sonny & Cher or Elton John & Kiki Dee?

CLAIRE

I was thinking Hall & Oates?

BILLY

But Oates doesn't sing.

CLAIRE

If you sound like your brother, then that's for the best.

EXT. MARKET CAFE PATIO - AFTERNOON

Claire and Grayer sit across from each other, each gazing into their salads. They have the place largely to themselves.

GRAYER

That salad looks really good, what's in it?

CLAIRE

I think some endives and slivers of Spanish olives? Your, um, your salad looks good too.

GRAYER

Frankly, it sucks. I want a burger.

CLAIRE

Wow. I haven't heard you say that in forever. Do you hate protein shakes now too?

GRAYER

No, they're amazing. I've just ... look, I know I fucked things up.

CLAIRE

That's kind of a given, isn't it? But, if we're being honest, things have been shitty for a good while, don't ya think?

GRAYER

I know - I'm so sorry ... about everything. I just thought our lives would be so different by now. I'd have my own gym and you'd be a law partner. I guess not.

(a beat)

Again, I feel awful that things ended up like this. I still have feelings for you. I really do.

CLAIRE

Yeah, I'm not ready for that conversation. ... Baby steps.

GRAYER

Okay, I understand. Are you doing okay ... considering?

CLAIRE

Yeah, I'm alright, considering. ... Are you staying at her place?

GRAYER

Who?

CLAIRE

The She-Hulk you were in bed with.

GRAYER

Oh. ... Her name's Lexi, by the way. Yeah, we're staying out at one of the beach houses in Malibu.

CLAIRE

Beach houses? Plural? How freaking old is she?

GRAYER

She's twenty-five. Oh, I see, yeah, they're not hers really. Her family, basically her mom, owns a string of gyms on the west coast.

CLAIRE

Is it serious?

GRAYER

Oh, god I hope not. I mean, she's beautiful, but she's a lot to deal with. She's very possessive. You can't imagine how hard it is ...

CLAIRE

(interrupting)

Sounds like a whole lot of 'not my problem.'

EXT. PARKING LOT IN FRONT OF KATZ JIU JITSU - EVENING

Claire pulls in, exits her car, and walks into Katz Jiu Jitsu. Toward the back of the parking lot Jamie peddles her bicycle, stealthily following her, to see where she's going.

INT. KATZ JIU-JITSU, MAIN MAT - A LITTLE LATER

As Claire approaches the mat the other students are warming up and there appears to be a good bit of buzz going on -- people whispering to each other and giggling.

Benjamin leads the class in warm ups as Claire looks around.

EXT. FRONT OF KATZ JIU-JITSU, A LITTLE LATER

Jamie peeks into Katz gym around the logo, careful to not be observed by anyone. From her POV we see the students, including Claire, drilling techniques. She seems ruffled.

JAMIE

What the what?

INT. KATZ JIU-JITSU, MAIN MAT, A LITTLE LATER

BENJAMIN

Let's roll. Pick a partner.

Everyone partners up. On the other end of the mat Jeremy and Janet are all smiles and laughing as they roll together. Benjamin approaches Clair, who is partnerless.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

I guess you're the odd one out. So you'll have to roll with me.

CLAIRE

Don't worry. I'll go easy on you.

They LAUGH a little and begin rolling.

EXT. FRONT OF KATZ JIU-JITSU, A LITTLE LATER

Jamie angrily sends a text from her phone and then gets on her bicycle and peddles away in a huff.

INT. KATZ JIU-JITSU, MAIN MAT

Claire partners up with Jessica and they begin rolling.

JESSICA

(quietly)

So, I hear you were making out with Jeremy at Karaoke.

CLAIRE

(whispering)

That is not true! He kissed me.

JESSICA

(whispering)

People said you kissed him back.

CLAIRE

(whispering)

Not true! Not really ... maybe, sorta. Shit! Pardon my French.

JESSICA

(smiling warmly)

I'm just screwing with you. Don't sweat it. But people were talking a little. Geez, this is just like middle school all over again.

They roll some more with Jessica easily gaining the upper hand. The BUZZER SOUNDS and they get up and get water. Claire is exhausted. She turns around to put down her water bottle and is face to face with Janet.

JANET
(flatly)
Let's roll, Claire bear.

Claire's face is etched in anxiety but there's no way to make a plausible exit or excuse - this is happening. They begin on their feet and all the students' eyes are on them.

Claire attempts a half-hearted double leg take down, but Janet sprawls and, after a scramble, gets the take down.

Most of the other students pretty much quit their rolls to watch this match up.

TEDDY
(whisper chanting)
Old lady fight ... old lady fight.

Several of the other students soon join in.

STUDENTS
(whisper chanting)
Old lady fight ... old lady fight.

Benjamin sees what's going on and looks at Teddy.

BENJAMIN
Get back to your rolling! Now!

As Claire and Janet continue to struggle with each other, the students go back to their matches - but only half-heartedly - they're still more interested in this one.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)
Thirty seconds left on the clock.

Then with one mighty heave Claire executes a skillful scissor sweep and ends up mounting Janet. Victory is hers! Or so it would seem.

In the transition, Janet has secured a sleeve choke around Claire's neck. While Claire sits on top of her, Janet pinches her elbows together with determination - causing Claire's face to turn three shades of red along with a little blue.

About to pass out, Claire taps out, and Janet releases, and the BUZZER SOUNDS.

They get up and the other students turn back to their 'matches' - pretending like they weren't watching. Janet gives Claire a warm hug.

JANET

It's all good. Jiu Jitsu is love.

CLAIRE

We're cool?

JANET

We always were.

EXT. PARKING LOT IN FRONT OF KATZ JIU JITSU - NIGHT

Claire bumps into Jessica who's waiting for her ride.

JESSICA

Sweet scissor sweep - good job.

CLAIRE

Well, I guess next I need to learn to defend the choke.

JESSICA

Eh, I wouldn't worry about it too much. You did really well. You're really improving fast ...

(grinning)

for an old person.

CLAIRE

(smiling)

Nicely played.

They LAUGH a little as Jessica's dad, STAN MERCER (41), pulls up and gets out of his car.

JESSICA

Dad, this is Claire, the new girl I told you about.

CLAIRE

(laughing)

So now I'm a new girl and not an elderly person.

JESSICA

Well, actually, you're both very, very old.

STAN

Hi. I hope she's not been a pain.

CLAIRE

No, she's a good teacher. And I understand you're teaching her to drive?

STAN

Please don't remind me.

(to Jessica)

I'm going to say 'hi' to Jeremy okay? Then we've gotta run.

(to Claire)

It was great to finally meet you.

He leaves and Claire watches him go. Jessica notices her noticing him.

CLAIRE

(very quietly to herself)

Hmm. Cute.

JESSICA

(fake vulnerable)

Are you gonna be my new mommy?

CLAIRE

Oh, my gosh, I didn't mean ...

JESSICA

(laughing)

Relax, I'm screwing with you!

INT. BIG LAW FIRM OFFICES, CLAIRE'S OFFICE - MORNING

As Claire works she gets a TEXT BEEP. An INSERT reveals its Grayer.

GRAYER (TEXT)

Coffee? Hoping we could talk.

CLAIRE

Stacked at work. Meet me at Karaoke place at eight tonight.

GRAYER (TEXT)

Cool - see you there.

Just as she puts her phone down Jamie appears in her doorway.

JAMIE

I thought we were friends.

CLAIRE

What are you talking about? And what was that weird emoticon text you sent me last night?

JAMIE

So, you're doing the whole Brazilian thing now?

CLAIRE

What? No! Hell, I barely even wax my legs.

JAMIE

I mean Jiu Jitsu.

CLAIRE

Well, why didn't you just say that? ... It's no big deal. It's just a thing I've been doing.

JAMIE

Well, you didn't tell me about it. I thought we were best friends.

CLAIRE

We are - why do you even care? ... Did you want to do it too?

JAMIE

Well, yeah, maybe. It could be a friend bonding experience.

CLAIRE

Sure, why not? You can come tonight.

JAMIE

Are the dudes hot?

CLAIRE

No! It's not like that. You can't do any of your ... weird stuff.

JAMIE

Relax, I won't embarrass you. So, do I need to wear a cup?

INT. KATZ JIU-JITSU, MAIN MAT - EVENING, MONTAGE SEQUENCE

-- Jamie is already huffing and puffing during warm ups.

-- Claire drills some techniques with Jamie.

-- Jamie rolls with Jessica and gets dominated.

-- Jamie rolls with Claire and gets dominated. She's getting quite annoyed at this point.

-- Jamie is approached by tiny Oleg to roll.

JAMIE
(quietly to herself)
Finally, sweet vengeance.

OLEG
Please excuse, you say again?

JAMIE
Don't worry about it. Let's go.

They start on their feet and Oleg takes her down easily. But she does a good job of getting closed guard and squeezes her legs together hard around his small waist.

OLEG
(wincing a little)
Leg muscles **very** strong.

CUT TO:

On the other end of the mat Jessica and Claire roll.

JESSICA
So, you'll see my dad at Karaoke.

CLAIRE
You're coming tonight?

JESSICA
Not me, I have a test tomorrow.
Just you two, all alone. Nervous?

CLAIRE
(smiling)
Whoa, slow down there cowgirl.

JESSICA
(mock little girl voice)
But you'd be so much better than my
other step mommies.

CUT TO:

Down at the other end of the mat, Oleg still can't seem to break Jamie's tenacious thighs' closed guard. They're both breathing heavily from the vigorous battle of wills.

JAMIE
(grabbing his collar and
pulling him close)
Can you feel it little man? Can you
feel the heat up in here?

OLEG
(petrified)
Is American slang? Air conditioning
is fully on.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. KARAOKE BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

Claire and Jamie enter the bar and soon bump into Stan.

CLAIRE
Hey, I know you.

STAN
Oh, Jessica said you'd be here
tonight.

CLAIRE
Yeah, she told me tonight would be
especially appropriate for both of
us since it's 'oldies' night.

CUT TO:

Meanwhile Oleg has taken the stage and has begun crooning his
version of T. Pendergrass's "Close The Door."

CUT TO:

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
This is my friend Jamie.

But Jamie is already being drawn to the stage by the sultry
tones of Oleg's voice and is walking away.

JAMIE
(not even looking back)
Later.

CLAIRE
At least give the emcee my song
request.

Jamie just nods without looking back as she moves toward the
stage. Claire gets a TEXT BEEP and pulls out her phone.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
(to Stan)
Just a sec.

An INSERT reveals it's Grayer.

GRAYER (TEXT)
I'm running a little late.

She puts the phone back in her pocket quickly.

CLAIRE
Sorry, where were we?

CUT TO:

Meanwhile Jamie has taken a front row seat. Oleg moves toward the front of the stage and continues crooning seductively.

JAMIE
(quietly)
Yeah.

CUT TO:

Claire and Stan have moved closer to the stage at a small table. They CLINK beers and each take a swig.

STAN
Jessica tells me your divorced or getting divorced, is that right?
(a beat, as Clair thinks)
I apologize, that's intrusive. I'm not very good at, um, being single.

CLAIRE
It's fine. But the answer is a tentative 'no'. Actually, it's ...

STAN
Complicated?

Claire nods and they CLINK BEERS again.

CUT TO:

Jamie takes her turn at the microphone, belting out a version of the Pretenders' 'Brass in Pocket.' Oleg sits on the front row taking it all in.

OLEG
Oh, I feel heat now. I feel heat up in here.

CUT TO:

STAN
Yeah, so I'm pretty terrified of the prospect of Jessica driving.

CLAIRE
But she's so good on the mats. You'd think that would transfer.

STAN

Not really. She's actually very uncoordinated in real life.

The have a polite LAUGH and Jamie's song ends.

Grayer finally arrives and approaches the table.

GRAYER

Sorry I'm late.

There is an awkward pause. Claire's at a loss and Stan just looks confused.

KARAOKE EMCEE (O.S.)

All right, thank you Jamie. Is it hot in here or is just me? Any who, our next singer is Claire Goldman - come on up Claire!

CLAIRE

(to herself)

Wow, this really **is** complicated.

STAN

Whuh?

CLAIRE

Oh, nothing. Um, Stan this is my husband Grayer. Grayer, this is my friend Stan. ... And now I am going to go sing.

Claire sprints to the stage, leaving the two alone.

STAN

Hey, have a seat.

GRAYER

Thanks man, I appreciate it.

STAN

You're in amazing shape. Are you a fitness model or something?

GRAYER

(embarrassed)

Oh, stop.

CUT TO:

Claire starts into a rousing rendition of The Who's "You Better You Bet" with Teddy providing backup vocals.

CUT TO:

Stan and Grayer are approached by a very angry looking Lexi, who's in full workout gear.

LEXI

You're here to see **her** aren't you?!
(pointing at Claire)

GRAYER

Uh, kinda.

LEXI

My friend said she saw you making
out with an older lady in the mall
yesterday!

GRAYER

She and I did not do that.

CUT TO:

Claire notices the commotion at the table but keeps singing. Meanwhile, on the front row, Oleg sits on Jamie's lap and they make out with no shame.

CUT TO:

LEXI

Listen, if you need some space and
want to 'ghost' me for a while
that's one thing. But you **do not**
cheat on me you little shit!

She storms out of the bar.

GRAYER

(to Stan)

Sorry, I gotta go. It was really
nice to meet you.

STAN

Likewise.

Grayer leaves and Stan turns his attention back toward Claire's performance.

CUT TO:

Claire approaches the end of her song and looks over at Stan and the debacle that just happened.

They lock eyes and from her POV we see Stan just smiling and shrugging his shoulders. She smiles back at him warmly and finishes the song.

CLAIRE (SINGING)
*You better bet your life - Or love
 will cut you - just like a knife.*

EXT. MARKET CAFE PATIO - LATE MORNING

Claire and Jamie stare down their brunch plates. Jamie looks like she's sporting a hangover.

CLAIRE
 I love brunch so much. It's like a reward you get for not pursuing a life of crime.

JAMIE
 (groggy)
 I'm pretty sure criminals still eat brunch from time to time.

CLAIRE
 Yeah, but it would be tainted by their knowledge of their wrongdoings. It would be nothing but guilt biscuits.

JAMIE
 (after taking a big swig of coffee)
 I just need about a gallon of caffeine in my belly.

CLAIRE
 Feeling a hangover from Oleg's saliva?

JAMIE
 No. But his saliva actually tastes amazing, by the way.

Claire makes a GAGGING SOUND and then gets a TEXT BEEP. She looks at her phone briefly and puts it down.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
 Grayer?

CLAIRE
 Yeah. We're supposed to meet for coffee later.

JAMIE
Have you talked since last night?

CLAIRE
He called and told me he ended it
with Lexi.

JAMIE
And?

CLAIRE
And ... I still don't know. I mean,
obviously I have feelings for him;
we've been married for a decade.
He's been a great husband for most
of it.
(a beat)
And then this text I just got - he
says he wants me to meet someone?

JAMIE
Wait, what?

CLAIRE
I really hope he didn't buy me a
puppy to make things better. I
mean, I'd love it. But Puppy would
not be cool with another puppy.

JAMIE
Or maybe he's going to introduce
you to his bastard child from a
years past dalliance.

CLAIRE
(laughing)
'Dalliance'? Is that a word we're
using now? ... You need to stop
listening to NPR, pronto.

EXT. STARBUCKS PATIO - AFTERNOON

Claire waits for Grayer while sipping a latte and munching on
a scone. The patio is fairly crowded and adjoins a boardwalk
by the beach.

CLAIRE
(quietly to herself)
Ah, second brunch.

From the boardwalk Lexi approaches in quite a huff. She's
clearly pumped up and sidles up right next to Claire's table.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
 (very rattled)
 What are you doing here? It's, um,
 Lexi, right?

LEXI
 That's right, it's Lexi. I've been
 following you all day, bitch.

People at nearby tables are staring and some of them are moving slightly away from them.

CLAIRE
 (to everyone)
 Nothing to see here, folks. We're
 just, uh, rehearsing a scene. Two
 actresses doing a read.

LEXI
 (really angry now)
 Are you meeting him here?

CLAIRE
 Uh ... no? Maybe? Which answer
 makes you less angry? ... Please,
 sit down and we can talk.

LEXI
 The time for talking is over. Stand
 up now!

CLAIRE
 Sure. Excellent idea. It's best for
 me to just get up and leave.
 (turns to walk away)
 That's the adult thing to do.

As Claire gets a couple of steps away Lexi TACKLES her to the ground. Claire is frazzled but manages to adeptly get Lexi into her closed guard.

As the crowd forms a circle around them, people start filming with their phone cameras.

GUY IN CROWD
 (filming with his phone)
 Worldstar! Worldstar! I'm totally
 posting this on YouTube!

Lexi throws a flurry of punches at Claire's head, but she can't connect because Claire has broken her posture, pulling her in close to her. Lexi just starts pressing on Claire's head and chest with her forearms, not doing any damage.

Meanwhile, Grayer approaches, holding hands with his attractive and buff silver-haired lady friend, BEATRICE COOK (51). They push their way through the crowd to the fight.

Claire manages to pull Lexi's right arm over her chest and then swivels on her hips and throws her leg over Lexi's head to execute a flawless arm bar lock. Lexi gets flipped off of Claire and onto her back as Claire tightens the lock from the top position.

Lexi is clearly in pain but won't give in or give up.

BEATRICE
 (threatening Claire with a
 cup of hot coffee)
 Young lady, get up off of my
 daughter this very instant or
 you'll be wearing this!

Claire releases the hold, scoots away, and looks on in amazement.

LEXI
 Mommy?

BEATRICE
 Lexi, get up off the ground and
 quit acting like a common thug!

LEXI
 (to Grayer, upset)
 Is my mom the older lady you were
 with?

BEATRICE
 (answering for Grayer)
 Lexi, get yourself together. Honey,
 he's too old for you anyway. This
 is just how it is. Now c'mon
 sweetie, we'll talk this out
 calmly.

Beatrice puts her arm around Lexi who's rubbing her hurt elbow, and they begin to walk away. Beatrice briefly looks over her shoulder to Claire.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)
 (mouthing to Claire)
 Thank you.

Claire just nods - still in shock from the whole scene. Grayer gives Claire the 'hand phone to the ear' gesture.

GRAYER
 (mouthing to Claire)
 I'll call you later.

A few people in the crowd pat Claire on the back, kind of congratulating her and expressing support.

CLAIRE
 (to herself)
 Geez, what a ripoff - a perfectly executed arm bar - and no one from the gym here to see it.

EXT. LOS ANGELES SCENIC OVERLOOK TRAIL - JUST BEFORE DAWN

Claire and the other Katz Jiu Jitsu group members carry puzzle mats up a long hill - they're almost to the top. Claire is letting Jessica walk Puppy on a leash and he's enjoying the sights.

CLAIRE
 (to Jessica)
 How often do you all do this insane daybreak training?

JESSICA
 Usually one Saturday a month. But it's not a set thing.

CLAIRE
 You do know that this is one of only two days I get to sleep in, right?

JESSICA
 Hey, me as well.
 (a beat)
 Yeah, I thought it was stupid at first. But when you get up there you'll see. And sometimes it's nice ... I dunno ... to have traditions and stuff.

They arrive at the top and begin putting together the mats. Teddy sets out some sports drinks, coffee, and snacks for everyone. Puppy plays around with Jamie and Oleg.

CLAIRE
 So, we greet the sun, is that it?

JESSICA
 Yeah, sorta. Just follow my lead.
 (a beat)
 So, are you still 'complicated'?

CLAIRE
 I see your dad told you. You two
 really are a team, aren't you?

JESSICA
 (grinning)
 Yup.

CLAIRE
 Well, after yesterday I am a lot
 less complicated. Let's just say
 I'm 'single-ish' now, okay?

JESSICA
 Cool.

With the mats assembled, the sun has just risen. Benjamin and Billy stand toward the edge of the overlook and face the rest who are standing in a line with their hands joined.

BENJAMIN
 All right, everyone ready?

EVERYONE
 Yes!

BENJAMIN
 Okay, one ... two ... three ...

EVERYONE
 (raising their arms)
 Bom-dia!

Everyone CHEERS and hugs a little and they begin warming up, as The Beatles "Here Comes The Sun" plays.

FADE OUT.