

CHOSEN FAMILY

Written by

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Based on several true life events

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EXT. 1970'S SOUTHERN CHURCH - SUNDAY MORNING DALLAS, TEXAS

Small white church surrounded by lush greenery in Dallas,  
FAINT SCREAMS coming from inside the church.

EXT. CHURCH ENTRANCE DOUBLE DOORS - SECONDS LATER

Double doors fly open as if compelled.

INT. CHURCH CONGREGATION - CONTINUOUS

Backside of congregation members watching a film (glowing screen) with SCREAMS and CRYING out in the film. BOOMING VOICE of the Devil delivering his message.

DEVIL (O.S.)

Your soul is damned for all  
eternity. You have lived a life of  
sin. You disgraced God, your  
family, your brothers and sisters.  
Now you belong to me. Smell their  
burning flesh.

Several MEMBERS (uncomfortable) shift in their seats, someone coughs, a man tugs at his shirt collar, one woman (nervously) shifts her Sunday hat. The film ends.

PREACHER (60's), white hair, married, stands up out of his chair on stage, starched white button down shirt, black slacks, clutching WORN BLACK BIBLE.

PREACHER

This is God's plan for sinners to  
burn in Hell for homosexual deviant  
acts.

Preacher continues (silent) in background. DRAG QUEEN enters.

INSERT: DRAG QUEEN

DRAG QUEEN (30's in the 1970's) SASHAYS into frame, introduces herself as AUNT JUNE, compassionate yet fearful, wearing pageant gown, big wig, dripping jewels (Southern attitude).

AUNT JUNE

Lord I hope my wig don't catch on  
fire! This program needs  
interruption (holding FIRE  
EXTINGUISHER). (Surprised, turns  
around to camera) Oh, hello. Call  
me Aunt June, everybody does.

(MORE)

## AUNT JUNE (CONT'D)

I am the surrogate mother to outcast queer youth. I had a mother for drag. Everyone deserves a home where they feel safe and accepted.

Aunt June opens her COMPACT MIRROR, coifs wig, applies more LIPSTICK.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. A CHURCH PEW - CONTINUOUS

(Terrified) girl and boy twins RISSA & KASEY (6), seated on either side of their MOTHER in church pew. DRESSED in 70's attire. They grasp hands across mom's lap as (silent) tears stream down their faces.

KASEY

(Whispers)  
We have to hide.

RISSA

(Whispers)  
Forever.

The twins bury their faces in their mother's lap.

INT. CHURCH PULPIT STAGE - CONTINUOUS

AUNT JUNE

The 60's were brutal compared to the 70's. In the South, you were raised with the fear of God put into you. (More Southern attitude) You prayed you were anything but gay.

Aunt June waves a GAY PRIDE FLAG. A BUCKET of BROCHURES dumps onto Aunt June.

Aunt June picks up a BROCHURE that reads:

***Conversion Therapy Camp works. Pray the Gay Away.***

Aunt June rips up brochure, throws into air like confetti.

AUNT JUNE (CONT'D)

Proudly born this way. There should be a song written about this. (Sassy) Now, I love Jesus. And Dolly. And mocktails. And men. Sometimes all at the same time.

INT. CHURCH PEW WITH TWINS - CONTINUOUS

(Petriified) stares on the twins faces psychic connecting together without saying a word.

Aunt June is bent down behind the twins like a guardian angel in a vibrant white gown.

AUNT JUNE

(singing)

Hush little babies don't you cry,  
Aunt June's gonna buy you some  
headphones and a bodyguard. And a  
therapist cause you'll need one.

EXT. GRAVESITE - 40 YEARS LATER CLOUDY LATE MORNING

Adult twins Kasey and Rissa stand side by side holding hands (silent) TEARS rolling down their cheeks.

Rissa (late 40's), lesbian, Kasey's twin sister, empathetic rebel, established painter, petite.

RISSA

40 years later. YOU still never  
accepted me. Thank God for Aunt  
June.

Kasey (late 40's), gay, Rissa's twin brother, generous and inhibited, teacher, widow, muscular.

KASEY

Since you're dead, you know I'm gay  
too. Rollin over in your grave Dad?

THUNDER CRACKS and the twins look up at moody skies.

RISSA

Our weather is hormonal.

KASEY

We can share the news with everyone  
tonight. Time to go.

Rissa looks down at the coffin and throws DIRT on top.

RISSA

Ashes to ashes. Dust to dust. Say  
goodbye to the Queer bus.

Kasey pulls open his trench to share over Rissa. They dash for Kasey's FORD F-150 KING RANCH TRUCK as the RAIN starts.

INT. RISSA & DENISE'S HOME - AFTERNOON

Rissa and Kasey enter the front door opening wide to the expansive inviting living room and kitchen decorated from catalogs like Ethan Allen, Pottery Barn, and Restoration Hardware. The home is adorned with oversized seating for an army that screams everyone gathers here, bright bold paintings, original artwork, and filled with love. Gorgeous model and magazine worthy feature.

DENISE and SHELBY are in the open chef's kitchen PREPARING SNACKS on the luxurious island.

Kasey sets his MESSENGER BAG and an APPLE GIFT BAG on the entryway table floored by gorgeous hardwood flooring. He follows Rissa into the thriving kitchen.

INT. RISSA & DENISE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Denise (50's), Rissa's wife, focused with control issues, Pansexual, licensed therapist, butch.

DENISE  
(hugging Rissa)  
Adult beverage?

RISSA  
(still hugging)  
Have one with me?

Shelby (late 40's), Bisexual, Rissa's best friend since college, hard-working and commitment issues, sexy, impeccable.

Shelby hugs Rissa as Denise switches to hug Kasey.

SHELBY  
(hugging)  
I brought Breckenridge Bourbon. My bestie's favorite.

The four are hugging while talking.

RISSA  
You know me well.

SHELBY  
It's only been 30 years. You could still surprise me.

Everyone CHUCKLES and breaks their embraces.

Rissa wipes TEARS from her eyes.

SHELBY (CONT'D)  
Drink your juice.

The four pick up CRYSTAL GLASSES of bourbon. They cheers.

RISSA  
I would say rest in peace.

KASEY  
Nothing about Dad was peaceful.

DENISE  
Girls will be home at 9 from  
Bonnie's. Hopefully enough time to  
decompress? We can cancel dinner?

RISSA  
Keep dinner. Big plans to share  
with our Chosen Family.

KASEY  
And we picked up a gift for the  
girls. Small retail therapy.

Rissa and Kasey savor their last sip of Bourbon.

SHELBY  
I brought your fav red for tonight.

KASEY  
You have the best taste.

SHELBY  
Not in dating.

EVERYONE CHUCKLES. Much needed laughter.

KASEY  
Thankfully you have a larger pool  
to choose from.

SHELBY  
Not helping.

INT. RISSA & DENISE'S DINING ROOM - EVENING WEEKLY DINNER

Long wooden table inlaid with turquoise stone flocked by  
candles, food and boasting 12 place settings.

Rissa, Denise, Kasey, Shelby, Aunt June (now in 70's) and  
TAYLOR are all seated at the table chatting.

Taylor (40's to 50's), Trans Woman, entrepreneur, gorgeous, highly intelligent and guarded.

TAYLOR

(graceful)

Thank you for having me. I am not accustomed to being invited to family dinners.

RISSA

(side eye to Denise)

A nice surprise.

KASEY

Taylor, how do you know Denise?

TAYLOR

I was a client before I transitioned. She became my mentor, then friend. Being social adds sustenance I have been told.

DENISE

I knew everyone would enjoy having you Taylor.

RISSA

Mom died when we were little. Blood family disowned and kicked me out. I was a gay teen homeless statistic living in my red VW bug parked at Home Depot. I chose the streets over conversion camp. You noticed me and welcomed me with open arms. You became my *other mother*. *YOU* birthed chosen family vibes. This is all because of you Aunt June (tearful).

Everyone raises a glass to cheers.

AUNT JUNE

Creator blessed me with the daughter I prayed for. Blood isn't always thickest. I hit the jackpot of answered prayers with you darlin.

TAYLOR

(tearful) How did the rest of you meet?

RISSA

Kasey is my twin. Aunt June you heard. Kasey and I went to college with Shelby. Denise won my painting at a Black Tie dinner in 2010. She asked to meet the artist. (Smitten) Instant chemistry equals married with children.

DENISE

Best night of my life.

Rissa leans over to kiss Denise.

KASEY

I never came out to our family. My only regret was not going with Ris that day.

RISSA

I wouldn't change a thing. No regrets. We found our way back.

KASEY

Aunt June hosted Friday night Chosen Family dinners. Ris and I asked to carry on her tradition.

AUNT JUNE

Hate is taught. The world would be a better place if we stopped teaching it. People come and go, but the love stays.

SHELBY

Friday dinners make the week worth it. Speaking of family. What's the verdict on the inheritance.

KASEY

We are converting the old mansion to open a school with living quarters for LGBTQ+ homeless youth. Hopefully open in two years.

RISSA

Safe off streets. Warm beds, food, free education. I'll teach art for self expression.

Shelby looks at Rissa, fighting back tears.



SHELBY  
 (delighted)  
 It's everything you didn't have.  
 And teaching them chosen family  
 values.

KASEY  
 I will leave my current teaching  
 job to transition over to our  
 school. Mentor. Be on the board.

SHELBY  
 I would love to be involved. And  
 decorate.

RISSA  
 Brilliant! Hoping Denise will  
 offering counseling for mental  
 health? (Begging eyes)

DENISE  
 No is not an option. Our youth need  
 this. I love it. Taylor was my  
 mentee and is receiving her  
 therapist's license.

TAYLOR  
 I would be honored to assist. My  
 focus is Trans youth.

KASEY  
 Ris and I thought we would name it  
 June Academy.

Aunt June tears up as Rissa and Kasey look for her approval.

SHELBY  
 Beautiful and moving.

Shelby fast blinks to keep tears at bay.

DENISE  
 Perfect tribute.

RISSA  
 All agreed then.

Everyone nods and raises their glasses.

RISSA (CONT'D)  
 You saved me at 15. A small token  
 of gratitude to my *other mother*.

AUNT JUNE  
Utterly speechless.

ALL  
(all cheers)  
To June Academy.

Everyone takes a drink.

INT. RISSA & DENISE'S LIVING ROOM - 9:00 P.M.

Taylor and Aunt June have left. Rissa, Denise, Shelby and Kasey sit on the oversized sectional chatting, drinking red wine.

The front door swings wide open. Rissa and Denise's twin girls, SIENNA and VIOLET burst in.

Sienna (10), Violet's twin sister, artist like Rissa, sensitive empath, plays soccer.

Violet (10), Sienna's twin sister, scholar and writer, loves sports like Kasey, avoids feelings, plays soccer.

Violet is doing footwork with a SOCCER BALL.

RISSA  
(joyful)  
Momma needs a kiss.

Sienna and Violet each take a cheek and kiss Rissa.

KASEY  
Any left for me?

Sienna and Violet make their rounds and kiss Uncle Kasey, Denise and Shelby.

RISSA  
Gifts from me and your Uncle Kasey.

Rissa hands the APPLE BAG to the girls.

Sienna and Violet pull out TWO 12.9" APPLE IPAD PROS.

SIENNA AND VIOLET  
(overjoyed)  
Thanks Momma and Uncle K!

KASEY  
Uncle K huh?

SIENNA  
(shrugging)  
Trying it out.

KASEY  
I like it. Upgrade (simutaneous  
high fives).

DENISE  
How was your day?

SIENNA  
I started a new graphite drawing  
and a painting.

VIOLET  
(footwork with soccer ball)  
I scored 4 goals in practice. And  
aced my history paper.

RISSA  
I birthed those beautiful humans.

DENISE  
Thank you for making me a Mom.

KASEY  
And for making me an Uncle.

SHELBY  
(cheers)  
And for making me a Godmother  
Auntie.

RISSA  
(singing)  
Can you feel the love tonight?

KASEY  
Ok, Elton John (pats Rissa's head).

SIENNA  
Sorry about your Dad, Momma.

VIOLET  
Are you ok?

RISSA  
Your grandfather was complicated.  
And not nice (teary eyes).

DENISE

Sadness and crying are a normal part of the grieving process. Momma is healing.

Violet is awkward with emotions and runs off with her SOCCER BALL. Sienna kisses Rissa's cheek.

Rissa grabs Sienna for another hug.

RISSA

(hugging)  
My carbon copy.

SIENNA

I love you Moms, Uncle K and Aunt Shelby.

Sienna grabs the APPLE BAG and reluctantly parts from Rissa as the adults respond.

RISSA, DENISE, SHELBY AND KASEY

(in unison)  
Love you too.

DENISE

And Violet is an Uncle K mini.

KASEY

Bless her heart (apologetically).

Rissa turns to Shelby.

RISSA

You aren't driving home are you?

SHELBY

(turns to Kasey)  
I would love to stay the weekend with you. I need out of Good ole' boy Dodge for a while.

KASEY

You should move back here.

RISSA

That would be amazing.

SHELBY

(disgusted)  
My boss slapped me on the butt again last week. He reeks of cigars, brandy and Old Spice.

RISSA

Leave.

SHELBY

I've tried to walk out. I'm the sensitive female or I must be on the rag (more disgusted).

DENISE

Go higher up. You are the last woman standing.

SHELBY

The board are all men. Also his hunting and drinking buddies.

DENISE

Talk to a lawyer. Human Rights Campaign. I can give you numbers.

SHELBY

I feel bad for his wife. She had to sleep with him to have kids (gagging).

RISSA

He should go to jail.

SHELBY

It was just a butt slap. (Uneasy) He did try to kiss me at the Christmas party last year, but he was drinking. We all were.

RISSA

(concerned)

You never shared that. Alcohol or not isn't an excuse to physically violate someone.

SHELBY

I guess I buried it in shame.

DENISE

There is nothing for you to be ashamed of. Please talk to someone.

SHELBY

I was afraid to lose my job. I poured 22 years of my soul into Smith Oil and Gas. (Hurt) I failed the other women.

Shelby starts to tear up.

DENISE  
Have you talked to a therapist?

SHELBY  
Just you right now.

DENISE  
I can arrange an appointment  
tomorrow with a colleague. Just  
say the word.

SHELBY  
Thank you (nods yes).

DENISE  
I will go make some calls.

Denise exits the living room. Rissa and Kasey give Shelby a familiar sandwiched hug.

INT. SMITH OIL AND GAS COPY ROOM- LATE AFTERNOON NEXT WEEK

COPY MACHINE HUMMING as Shelby pulls her PHONE out. She starts an INSTAGRAM LIVE VIDEO to share about comfortable work heels. She hears the door and stops talking. Her boss enters, clueless to her phone. He's staring at her butt.

LLOYD SMITH, 60's, large cowboy hat, alligator boots, overweight, entitled.

An UNLIT CIGAR perched between his lips as he smacks her hard on the ass.

Shelby slyly props her PHONE behind her while still being live. She whirls around to face him.

SHELBY  
(infuriated)  
Lloyd Smith! I have repeatedly  
asked you to stop making  
inappropriate advances.

MR. SMITH  
Just a lil love pat darlin  
(smirking). You shouldn't look so  
sexy. I can't help you turn me on.

SHELBY  
What would your wife think?

MR. SMITH  
Her oil well dried up years ago.

Mr. Smith advances closer and puts his hand up Shelby's dress as she is trying to fend him off. His hands are everywhere.

SHELBY

You have children.

MR. SMITH

Spoiled brats. Come on now sugar. I just wanna see what's under your hood.

His hands are up her dress trying to pull down her panties.

The cleaning person is entering with back to door from pulling a loaded CLEANING CART, oblivious and wearing headphones.

Interrupted, Mr. Smith skirts out the other door. Shelby reaches for her PHONE.

SHELBY

I am mortified. (Deep breath) You witnessed live what I have suffered for 22 years. I did an injustice to the other women who used to work here. (Crying) I'm deeply sorry. I am the last woman working at Smith Oil and Gas headquarters in Texas. I was stupid and stayed. I should have stood up for all the others. I live with that guilt. The good ol' boys club still exists. I have been complaining to the board for 10 years. My complaints were continually swept under the rug, just like the other dozen women. No means No. No is a complete sentence. (Crying) This is my stand for all women. Share this. Make this video go viral. I'm truly sorry to the women that worked here. Please don't be like me. Talk to a therapist. Report it. Stand up for yourself. Stand in solidarity. Fight for one another.

Shelby ends the Instagram Live video. She is numb at what just happened.

INT. DENISE'S BASEMENT HOME OFFICE - NEXT DAY LATE AFTERNOON

Denise answers her PHONE to an anxious Taylor.

DENISE  
(on phone)  
Are you ok?

TAYLOR (O.S.)  
My parents served a restraining  
order against me. I will lose my  
license (scared).

DENISE  
(on phone)  
What does the order say?

TAYLOR (O.S.)  
Illegal trespassing.

DENISE  
(on phone)  
Have you spoken with an attorney?  
HRC? Anyone besides me?

TAYLOR (O.S.)  
(shaken)  
No.

DENISE  
(on phone)  
Hang up with me and call a lawyer.  
Keep me updated.

TAYLOR (O.S.)  
Past office hours.

DENISE  
(on phone)  
I will help you through this. Call  
a lawyer now. Session tomorrow.  
Call.

Denise and Taylor hang up. Denise starts emailing her contacts. Taylor makes a call.

INT. RISSA & DENISE'S DINING ROOM - EVENING DINNER

Rissa, Denise, Kasey, Shelby, Aunt June, Sienna, and Violet are sitting down at the dinner table.

Kasey starts pouring WINE into wine glasses.



DENISE  
A week warranting wine.

AUNT JUNE  
Amen to that. And mocktails.

Aunt June sips her mocktail in all her glamour.

RISSA  
Fridays. Best day of the week.

INT. RISSA & DENISE'S DINING ROOM TABLE - AFTER DINNER

Forks clank as everyone finishes dinner and starts chatting. The DOOR BELL starts impatiently ringing. Rissa is amuzed and goes to the door.

INT. RISSA & DENISE'S HOME FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Rissa opens the front door to her FRANTIC niece, MORGAN.

Morgan, 16, Rissa and Kasey's niece via older sister, Bi-curious, empathetic and impatient, resembles Rissa.

RISSA  
(concerned)  
What's wrong darlin?

Morgan rushes into Rissa's arms, SOBBING.

Everyone at the dinner table looks over. Kasey and Denise rush over to Rissa and Morgan.

KASEY  
(concerned)  
What happened?

DENISE  
Let's sit down.

They all sit down on the massive gray sectional.

MORGAN  
I think I might be bi? Mom freaked.  
She and her boyfriend threw me out.

RISSA  
(hugs Morgan)  
History repeating itself.

KASEY  
(fuming)  
Did you bring anything?

MORGAN  
(hurt)  
Backpack. Mom wouldn't let me grab anything else. Said she paid for it all.

KASEY  
I will go get your things right now.

DENISE  
(calm)  
Wait until the morning. We should all get some rest tonight.

RISSA  
Have you eaten?

Morgan shakes her head no.

RISSA (CONT'D)  
I'll fix you a plate.

Everyone gets up and walks over to the dining table. Kasey grabs Morgan under his arm as Rissa fixes Morgan a plate.

KASEY  
(addressing everyone)  
This is our niece Morgan. She is joining us from now on.

Everyone happily welcomes Morgan with warm smiles.

AUNT JUNE  
Look like your Aunt Rissa darlin.

KASEY  
This is our chosen family, Morgan.

Rissa returns with a plate for Morgan. Everyone sits back down together.

INT. RISSA & DENISE'S HOME FRONT DOOR - NEXT DAY EARLY MORNING

DOORBELL RINGS. Rissa and Denise are in the kitchen having coffee while the kids are sleeping.

Rissa goes to the door and opens to her older sister.

EVE  
(hateful)  
I figure Morgan ran to the sinner  
house?

RISSA  
She came to us.

Denise heads to the front door.

DENISE  
(protective)  
She is resting. No thanks to you.

EVE  
(angry)  
You stay out of this.

DENISE  
I will not. This is my family and  
you are trespassing.

EVE  
(disgusted)  
Some essentials. Make sure she gets  
it.

Eve drops an oversized gym bag at the door by refusing  
Rissa's outstretched hand.

RISSA  
(disbelief)  
How could you disown your own  
daughter?

EVE  
We are a God-loving house. She  
refused the alternative.

RISSA  
You mean Camp Changeover?

EVE  
Their methods work. (Sarcastic)  
Would have worked for you.

DENISE  
(Upset) Conversion therapy is  
harmful.

Eve avoids addressing or looking at Denise, disgusted she is  
even speaking to her.

EVE

Y'all should read the bible. I put  
a copy in Morgan's bag.

RISSA

As my older sister, you know I read  
the same book. I parent from love,  
same as Jesus did. His foundation  
and message was love, Eve.

Clearly annoyed. Eve has had enough talk and turns to walk  
away as she SHOUTS.

EVE

(back turned)

Your filth infected my child. She's  
your problem now (dismissive).

Denise grabs the bag and shuts the door. A stunned Rissa  
breaks down.

RISSA

She will never change.

DENISE

She is programmed.

RISSA

Time hasn't softened her.

DENISE

We should check the bag.

RISSA

(silent tears)

I was thinking the same.

Denise sits the BAG down and unzips it. A letter to Morgan is  
tucked inside the front cover of a black bible.

Rissa reluctantly opens the letter.

INSERT LETTER:

**Morgan,**

***I hope you see the error of your ways. May you find God in  
your poisoned heart. Your Aunt Rissa contaminated you. I  
never should have left you alone with her. Homosexuality is a  
disease and you have been infected! Until you find The Lord,  
I have no choice but to cast you out of our home and life. I  
release all parental rights or associations to you. My sweet  
Morgan died yesterday and left you standing in her place. May  
God save your soul and you repent.***

BACK TO SCENE:

(Silent) TEARS stream down Rissa's face. Denise is not surprised at the letter.

Rissa drops the letter to the floor, stunned. Denise hugs Rissa tight.

RISSA (CONT'D)  
(still hugging)  
How should we handle this?

DENISE  
(still hugging)  
Rather she reads it or we hide it,  
she will be devastated. What would  
you like to do?

Rissa breaks the hug.

RISSA  
Burn it. Pretend it's Eve's cold  
dead heart.

DENISE  
Final answer?

RISSA  
She's hurt her enough. What if this  
letter breaks Morgan?

Morgan was heading to the bathroom as she overhears Rissa.  
Morgan enters the living room.

MORGAN  
What letter?

Startled Rissa and Denise spin around and fess up.

RISSA  
Your mom stopped by.

MORGAN  
Just now?

RISSA  
15 minutes ago.

Morgan sees the gym bag on the floor, Rissa is holding the bible as Denise is holding the letter.

DENISE  
We were discussing how to tell you  
about the letter.

MORGAN  
What's it say?

RISSA  
It's not pretty. You have suffered  
enough. You sure you want to know?

MORGAN  
Yes. No. Ugh.

Morgan plops down on the sectional. She is torn.

RISSA  
You don't have to read it.

DENISE  
It has the potential to hurt you  
further.

MORGAN  
What would you do Aunt Rissa?

RISSA  
Burn it. However, not my decision.  
Triggered old wounds. Your  
grandfather did the same thing to  
me. (Deep breath) You have to  
decide for yourself.

DENISE  
We support whatever you decide. We  
are here regardless.

Morgan hesitates and then puts her hand out for the letter.  
Denise reluctantly hands it to her.

Morgan (deep breath) starts to read the letter. (Silent)  
TEARS stream down her face as she continues to read.

MORGAN  
I'm an orphan.

RISSA  
Never. You can live with us or  
Uncle Kasey.

DENISE  
Your choice to make. Either works.

MORGAN  
(defeated)  
She chose Bobby Ray and religion  
over me.

RISSA  
 (perplexed)  
 She did the same to me. I'm sorry  
 baby girl. Wait, who's Bobby Ray?

MORGAN  
 The new boyfriend.

DENISE  
 Unbelievable.

RISSA  
 Pineapple Pancakes ease my pain.  
 Wanna join me?

DENISE  
 Or, we can give you space?

Morgan looks to Rissa for her reaction.

RISSA  
 Your call darlin.

MORGAN  
 (shyly)  
 Add in a vanilla latte?

RISSA  
 (impressed and surprised)  
 You drink coffee now? Guess I did  
 rub off on you.

Everyone lets out a little chuckle and heads into the  
 kitchen.

INT. RISSA & DENISE'S DINING ROOM TABLE - EVENING WEEKLY  
 DINNER

The gang is all seated at the dining table chatting. They go  
 around with their high and low of the week.

RISSA  
 (addressing her daughters)  
 What was your high and low of the  
 week girls?

SIENNA  
 Low, water spilled on my project.  
 High is Morgan.

VIOLET  
 Low, I finished my book. High is  
 definitely Morgan.

RISSA

My low, I burned dessert. Sorry. I mimic y'all's high and love having Morgan here.

MORGAN

Low was Mom. High was coming here.

Rissa side hugs Morgan.

DENISE

My low was doing my bookkeeping. My high is right now.

Rissa smiles big and kisses Denise.

KASEY

My low, a flat tire. My high, construction permit for the mansion.

SHELBY

My low was going to work. My high was Lloyd is pissed and staying far away from me.

TAYLOR

Low equates to a disowned payoff check. High was receiving the check despite mixed emotions.

INT. SMITH OIL AND GAS - AFTERNOON SHELBY'S OFFICE

Shelby's office is emptied. Several boxes sit outside her door. A facility man is removing her name plate.

SHELBY

(confused)

What's happening?

FACILITIES MAN

Just following orders.

The man never looks at Shelby, removes her name plate and leaves. She is devastated yet wants answers.

She grabs a box filled with pictures and personal items in one hand and her plant in her other hand.

She walks down the hall to Mr. Smith's office. A private security guard stands outside in front of his closed office double doors.



SECURITY GUARD

(stern)

No interruptions. No acceptions.

SHELBY

What's going on?

SECURITY GUARD

Just doing my job. (Pause) Are you Miss Winter?

SHELBY

Yes.

SECURITY GUARD

If you don't leave willingly, you will be escorted out and arrested for trespassing.

SHELBY

I haven't done anything wrong.

SECURITY GUARD

No additional warnings. I have orders for you to vacate.

SHELBY

Fine. I'm out.

SECURITY GUARD

You can't take that box or plant. Property of Smith Oil & Gas.

SHELBY

These are my personal belongings. Not company property.

The security guard radios for backup.

SECURITY GUARD

Terminated disgruntled and combative female. Removal assistance.

Shelby is stunned and reluctantly sets her box down. She takes her heels off. She devised a quick plan.

SHELBY

You want my heels too? I paid for those with company money. Don't steal my nude photos (nods to box).

The security guard falls for it and frantically starts rummaging through the box.

Shelby takes her heels in hand, plant and bolts for the door as the security guard is distracted searching for the nude photos. He realizes he was tricked.

Security guard radios another message.

SECURITY GUARD

She's on the run! Lock the entrance.

Shelby barely makes it out the sliding door as it closes and locks. The guards are trapped inside. Shelby races to her nearby sportscar and gets in.

SHELBY

All-state track team high school and college. You got smoked by a girl, boys (chuckles).

Shelby is driving off as the guards finally make it outside. She can see the guards in her rear view mirror clearly upset that she got away. She is pleased with herself.

INT. RENFRO ART GALLERY - EARLY AFTERNOON

Rissa just sold her massive painting to a customer on the gallery LANDLINE PHONE as MR. RENFRO arrives.

Mr. Renfro, 50's, English, gallery owner, dapper, tall, carries an antique cane.

Rissa is holding the artist tag from her painting reflecting the hefty \$575,000 price as she is speaking on the phone.

RISSA

I can have it delivered this  
afternoon before your gala tonight.

The customer is unheard on the phone. Mr. Renfro awaits near.

RISSA (CONT'D)

Excellent. Thank you for your  
repeat business Mr. Paloma.

Rissa excitedly hangs up the phone.

MR. RENFRO

(pleased)

Splendid! Going out with a bang.

RISSA

(puzzled)

Out with a bang?

MR. RENFRO

We sold our entire collections to  
Rodrick's of Austin. Minus that  
stupendous sale of course.

Mr. Renfro tips his hat toward the phone.

RISSA

(unsure)

Congratulations?

MR. RENFRO

You have been my greatest asset.

RISSA

Have been? (Pause) You're closing  
the gallery aren't you?

MR. RENFRO

Valentina and I found our dream  
Tuscany vineyard.

RISSA  
 (heartbroken)  
 When are we closing?

MR. RENFRO  
 Tonight I'm afraid. My apologies  
 for such short notice.

Mr. Renfro hands Rissa a check. She is stunned and doesn't look down at the check.

MR. RENFRO (CONT'D)  
 I hope you'll find that reflects my  
 deep appreciation of working  
 alongside your talent.

He motions toward the check in Rissa's hand. She finally looks down at the check.

INSERT CHECK:

***Rissa Fairchild***

***\$3,500,000 Million Dollars & 00 cents***

***Memo: Thank you for 30 glorious years***

BACK TO SCENE:

MR. RENFRO (CONT'D)  
 I shall messenger over another  
 check tomorrow for the Paloma sale.

RISSA  
 (still stunned)  
 I guess we should start preparing  
 the collections for Rodrick's?

MR. RENFRO  
 Nonsense. I hired contractors for  
 that job. We, my dear are  
 celebrating 30 years together.

Renfro TAPS his CANE. A sommelier appears with a chilled Louis Roederer: Cristal Vintheque 1996 champagne bottle and two exquisite crystal flutes.

RISSA  
 You went all out.

Renfro raises his glass to Rissa.

MR. RENFRO  
Only the best and most deserved.  
Cheers Rissa Fairchild. Masterful  
genius.

RISSA  
(uncertain)  
Wow. I don't know what to say  
except thank you.

MR. RENFRO  
I bare full confidence in your  
abilities to flourish. Life is  
short. Live fully.

RISSA  
I can't wait to see photos of the  
vineyard.

MR. RENFRO  
You have an open invitation to  
visit my dear. Bring your family  
for holiday.

RISSA  
We would love that. How's the view?

MR. RENFRO  
Splendid. A vibrant canvas waiting  
to be replicated by you.

RISSA  
We would love to visit. You aren't  
off the hook for photos.

They both laugh. With mixed feelings, Rissa clinks crystal  
glasses with Mr. Renfro.

INT. RISSA & DENISE'S DINING ROOM TABLE - EVENING

Denise is preparing dinner as Rissa arrives home. The house  
is quiet.

Rissa kisses Denise hello.

RISSA  
Where are the girls?

DENISE  
Kasey took them shopping. He wanted  
to get Morgan a phone.

RISSA  
Bet he comes back with way more  
than just a phone.

They both giggle.

DENISE  
Something's wrong.

RISSA  
Sort of. No. Change is good right?

DENISE  
(Lucille Ball reference)  
Esplain Lucy.

Rissa pauses (deep breath) then speaks.

RISSA  
You know I adore the Ricardos.  
Renfro (sigh) sold the gallery.

DENISE  
Wait, what?

RISSA  
He and Valentina found their  
perfect vineyard. In Tuscany. We  
closed tonight.

DENISE  
(unexpected)  
Tonight?

RISSA  
Sold the entire collection.  
Showered me with a celebratory  
thanks. And this.

Rissa slides the check to Denise.

RISSA (CONT'D)  
My parting gift. I'm officially  
unemployed.

DENISE  
(impressed)  
Technicality.

RISSA  
(sad)  
I've worked there since I was 17.  
What do I do now?

DENISE  
Whatever your heart desires.

RISSA  
Thank you and not helping.

DENISE  
Spa retreat? Open your own gallery?

RISSA  
I'm gonna have to think on this one. He's messengering over another check tomorrow for my Dreamland painting.

DENISE  
You sold Dreamland? That's fantastic honey.

RISSA  
Last hoorah I guess.

DENISE  
I'm sure it will be an adjustment. What can I do to help?

RISSA  
Make me popcorn?

DENISE  
Truffle oil?

RISSA  
Is there any other way?

Denise hugs Rissa, then starts to make popcorn. The 1980's air pop machine explodes. POPCORN is flying everywhere. She grabs a nearby pot lid as a shield and unplugs the popper.

DENISE  
(amused)  
How about a movie and theatre popcorn?

RISSA  
Not the same, but yes.

DENISE  
You pick a movie while I clean up this mess.

Rissa eyes Denise bending over and comes up behind her.

RISSA  
(flirty)  
I have a better idea.

DENISE  
Maybe after the mess?

RISSA  
Leave it. Let's get wild.

DENISE  
Wild? I can't just leave it. The girls might come home. Fall on my mess.

RISSA  
Indulge me please?

DENISE  
Babe, you know I can't stand a mess.

RISSA  
We haven't been intimate in months.

DENISE  
All the changes. Morgan. My client load. You're unemployed now.

RISSA  
You did see my check right?

DENISE  
We will both be home everyday, so we will have plenty of time.

RISSA  
Me being home bothers you?

DENISE  
We had a routine that works.

RISSA  
I need to connect with you Denise.

DENISE  
I have a lot of stress.

RISSA  
Over popcorn?

DENISE  
Challenging cases.



RISSA

We never have these issues. Are you seeing someone?

DENISE

Your mind immediately went there?

RISSA

(frustrated)

Where's it supposed to go when my wife doesn't want me?

DENISE

Can we go back to picking a movie?

RISSA

Talk to me, not at me. Why don't you want me?

DENISE

Are you diverting from the fact you lost your job that has been your identity for 30 years?

RISSA

Don't therapize me.

DENISE

You are being irrational.

RISSA

My feelings are irrational now?

DENISE

You went from wanting me to asking if I was seeing someone.

RISSA

Because you are shutting me out. You know I need affection.

DENISE

I kiss and hug you. I connect.

RISSA

I want to make love together. How we used to be. What's wrong?

DENISE

12 years. We are past the honeymoon stage.

RISSA  
(defensive)  
Why don't you want to have sex with  
your wife?

DENISE  
I am not in the mood to fight. I do  
not have the capacity for anything  
past a movie.

RISSA  
How long do you project this will  
continue?

DENISE  
Are you therapizing me now?

RISSA  
At first, I dismissed it thinking  
Mercury Retrograde was the culprit.  
It's been nine months since we have  
had sex or intimacy Denise.

DENISE  
You are counting?

RISSA  
(saddened)  
We used to be so close. What  
happened?

DENISE  
Life. Kids. Death. Unemployment.

RISSA  
I get the other three. Unemployment  
was today. Clearly it bothers you.

DENISE  
Unexpected. More change.

RISSA  
You saw the check. We will be  
great. I won't have to work.

DENISE  
You don't want to work?

RISSA  
There's more to life besides  
working it away.

DENISE  
You want to be Peg Bundy now?

RISSA

What's wrong with a break or  
occasional bon bons?

DENISE

I am concerned for the abrupt  
change. Your identity is rooted in  
that gallery.

RISSA

I'm sad. It's new. Let me process.  
Aren't you the expert at this?

DENISE

Take some space. Get some fresh air  
while I clean this mess.

RISSA

We should be cleaning up our mess.  
Screw the popcorn.

Denise goes back to cleaning up. Hurt, Rissa grabs her keys  
to go for a drive and exits.

INT. DENISE'S BASEMENT HOME OFFICE - NEXT DAY AFTERNOON

Denise and Taylor are having a session in Denise's large basement office. They are sitting in wing back chairs flocked by bookcases, a large desk and rich textures drawing you in.

DENISE

Plans for your newfound financial independence?

TAYLOR

Disinheritance and payoff money used wisely. I would like your input.

DENISE

Absolutely.

TAYLOR

Our town obviously lacks queer support. A safe haven.

DENISE

What are you planning?

TAYLOR

Common Grounds. A coffee shop cafe, lounge, flowing with books. A stage for poetry and queer events.

DENISE

Brilliant idea.

TAYLOR

With Renfro closing, I want to incorporate an art gallery to showcase queer artists. Do you think Rissa would be open to partnering with me?

DENISE

I will have you redirect to Rissa. We are experiencing challenges and I can not answer for her.

TAYLOR

Are you talking?

DENISE

Somewhat. Arguing mostly. Tension around changes.

TAYLOR

Understandable.

DENISE  
She will probably think I  
orchestrated this.

TAYLOR  
I will be mindful in my approach.

DENISE  
That being said, I think she would  
love the idea.

TAYLOR  
Irony. They paid me to disappear.  
Common Grounds promotes standing in  
the light.

DENISE  
You have a beautiful way of  
spinning the web. I am proud of  
you, Taylor.

TAYLOR  
Thank you. May I be of assistance  
to you?

DENISE  
Please do.

TAYLOR  
Be vulnerable. Reveal your truth.

DENISE  
I will think on it.

TAYLOR  
You overthink. Loving action is  
your access point. Common Ground.

DENISE  
Clever. This new venture reveals  
your humor side. I like it. I will  
see what I can do.

TAYLOR  
No seeing. Action. How would you  
counsel a client?

DENISE  
Right. Pride aside.

TAYLOR  
Circle back in a week?

DENISE

Make it two. I obviously have homework.

Both women chuckle.

EXT. COMMON GROUNDS CITY BUILDING - AFTERNOON NEXT DAY

Rissa arrives outside a corner city building in the gay neighborhood of Cedar Springs and Oak Lawn. Rissa approaches as Taylor is directing two sign guys outside.

TAYLOR

Perfect!

RISSA

What's happening here?

TAYLOR

Glad you ask. Care to join me inside?

RISSA

I'm intrigued.

Both women enter the door covered in craft paper concealing all the interior.

A long beautiful bar and a few booths are visible. Taylor points toward the bar stools.

TAYLOR

Please, have a seat.

RISSA

Did you buy this?

TAYLOR

I will get to that. I heard about Renfro. I would be exuberant if you would be the curator and director of Common Grounds.

RISSA

(perplexed)

You want me to manage your coffee shop?

TAYLOR

No. The adjoining art gallery featuring queer artists. I want you to consider partnering with me.

Taylor is patient and is confident of outcome.

Rissa ponders.

RISSA

Did Denise put you up to this?

TAYLOR

No. More a sense of incompleteness  
for our community build. The moment  
I heard about Renfro's, I  
envisioned you as the foundational  
missing piece.

RISSA

You have given me a lot to think  
about.

TAYLOR

That was my intention.

RISSA

I should discuss this with Denise.

TAYLOR

Understood. Is a week sufficient  
amount of time to say yes?

RISSA

Possibly sooner.

TAYLOR

My reasoning is selfish. You are an  
extraordinary artist and shall be  
equally so as curator.

RISSA

Give me a few days?

TAYLOR

Of course.

RISSA

Thank you Taylor.

Taylor smiles. Rissa stands, smiles back and exits.

INT. RISSA & DENISE'S KITCHEN - NEXT DAY EARLY EVENING

Rissa is standing as Kasey and Shelby are sitting at the  
kitchen bar counter. They are drinking wine.

KASEY  
Where are the girls?

RISSA  
Extra soccer practice. Morgan  
wanted to support them. They are  
really bonding.

SHELBY  
That's great.

KASEY  
And Denise?

RISSA  
Office. Working late.

KASEY  
Any better?

RISSA  
Same.

SHELBY  
What did I miss?

RISSA  
Disagreements. A lot. (Whispers)  
And no sex. Morgan moving in.  
Gallery closing. Popcorn fiasco.

SHELBY  
Popcorn what? Nevermind. I'm  
speechless.

RISSA  
Gotta love outward appearances.

KASEY  
How are you since the gallery  
closed?

RISSA  
I was sad. However, new  
development. It's why I asked you  
both here.

Shelby and Kasey perk up with wide eyes. Rissa pulls the  
folded check out from her paint splattered overalls.

KASEY  
Must be good if you are back in  
those ancient overalls. I swore I  
threw those out.



RISSA  
(smirks)  
You did. I found them.

Rissa slides her check over to Shelby and Kasey.

SHELBY  
That's a bucketload of goodbyes.

KASEY  
That deserves another glass. Shall  
I pour?

Kasey pours more Pride Mountain Vineyards Merlot all around and empties the bottle. Shelby pulls out another bottle from her bag.

SHELBY  
Good thing I brought a spare.

Everyone chuckles.

KASEY  
\$3 million? What now?

RISSA  
Contemplating about the check.  
Taylor presented me with an offer I  
don't want to refuse.

KASEY  
Say more.

RISSA  
Offered me curator and director of  
Common Grounds. She is adding an  
art gallery solely for queer  
showcases.

SHELBY  
That's amazing!

KASEY  
Why haven't you said yes?

RISSA  
I'm still processing Renfro's.

KASEY  
Callin BS. You think on your feet.  
You're processing upset with  
Denise.

RISSA

It's annoying at times being your twin. Ok, yes.

SHELBY

I see in your eyes you already want it. Your whole energy shifted.

RISSA

I would be doing everything I love. It will have studio space for me to paint and offer classes. She bought the entire corner lot.

SHELBY

Damn. I want it. Sadly, I'm not an artist.

KASEY

You win for best style.

Shelby blushes, then curtsies. Shelby picks up the wine bottle.

SHELBY

You get another pour for that.

Shelby pours more wine into Kasey's glass.

RISSA

You know I had to consult my besties.

SHELBY

We are pretty damn good.

KASEY

Cheers to that.

They raise their glasses to cheers.

SHELBY

When are you saying yes?

RISSA

Scheduled to meet next week, but I'm calling her tomorrow. I want this.

KASEY

Does Denise know?

RISSA  
I mentioned it. She seemed to  
approve. Didn't get excited.

KASEY  
She does seem stressed.

RISSA  
I accused her of seeing someone.

KASEY  
You did not.

RISSA  
Guilty, insecure party of one.

SHELBY  
How did she take that?

RISSA  
Shut down and obsessed over spilled  
popcorn.

SHELBY  
At least it wasn't spilled milk.  
Moo cow.

Shelby and Kasey laugh. Rissa playfully pushes them both  
away.

RISSA  
I hate love you.

SHELBY  
We are too pretty to hate.

KASEY  
You love us more than those  
tattered ole overalls.

RISSA  
Too close to call.

SHELBY  
I may have to put baby in the  
corner.

RISSA  
I was born a minute and 33 seconds  
before Kase. Not the baby.

KASEY

I suddenly hear Baby Sinclair's *Not the Momma* in my head from Dinosaurs.

Rissa and Kasey roll their eyes at Kasey's guilty pleasure of the Dinosaurs tv show.

Shelby changes the subject before Kasey can start referencing more tv show lines.

SHELBY

Is there a projected grand opening date?

RISSA

Taylor thinks we could in two months.

SHELBY

You just said we. You're all in.

KASEY

We are all in for you.

SHELBY

Can we help?

RISSA

I haven't started yet.

ONE YEAR LATER

EXT. COMMON GROUNDS RIBBON CUTTING - LATE MORNING

Taylor and Rissa cut the opening ribbon together. The crowd cheers and claps.

TAYLOR

A year ago today I purchased this corner lot. I dreamt of a safe space for our queer community. A place to thrive. Be empowered to be ourselves. My business partner Rissa helped me build this vision. Here, you are all chosen family. Welcome to Common Grounds.

Taylor slides the modern day barn door open and Common Grounds is officially open.

Custom mahogany and copper bar adorns all the fixings of the best, unique and gorgeous coffee bar cafe in the metroplex. Red faux leather booths parallel the adjacent bar. Opposite side of the booths is an internet lounge, private nooks, massive seating and sofas tucked everywhere. Game boards line the tables. Every wall has a bookshelf brimming with books and hanging works of art. Beyond the internet lounge and all gender bathrooms is a back room with the slightly elevated stage for events.

A door just beyond the furthest bar edge takes you to the gallery side, another door off the street or from the well-lit courtyard entrance. Beautiful art in a multitude of mediums hangs on every wall while sculptures and lighting bring attention to the center of the room.

The LGBTQ+ community starts flowing in and opening day is a wild success. Taylor and Rissa pose for pictures with local press.

RISSA

Amazing turnout.

TAYLOR

Indeed. Grateful you said yes. Partners.

RISSA

Our community needed this. It was an easy yes. I needed this.

INT. DOWNTOWN COURTROOM - MID AFTERNOON A WEEK LATER

Shelby is nervous for the lawsuit to begin against Smith Oil & Gas. Rissa, Kasey, Jordon, Allison and Denise are seated in the front row behind Shelby.

The 12 women also assaulted are seated in the next few rows behind the friends.

The black female judge speaks.

JUDGE

Counselor.

DEFENDANT ATTORNEY

Mr. Smith was simply playing a joke your honor. He knew he was being recorded.

SHELBY'S PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY

We clearly saw the Defendant Mr. Smith immediately exit the copy room as the cleaning woman entered. He was afraid to be caught sexually assaulting my client.

DEFENDANT ATTORNEY

Objection.

JUDGE

Overruled. I'll allow.

SHELBY'S PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY

Mr. Smith would not have run out if he knew he was being recorded when Mrs. Jenson entered the copy room.

DEFENDANT ATTORNEY

Objection your honor.

JUDGE

Overruled.

Mr. Smith starts a coughing fit. His attorney hands him water. Mr. Smith takes a couple of sips, continues to cough.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Mr. Smith do you need assistance?

Mr. Smith waves no, but doesn't speak. He begins to cough again.

DEFENDANT ATTORNEY

Short recess your honor?

JUDGE

Look after your client. 15 minute recess.

BAILIFF

All rise.

Mr. Smith doesn't rise, his attorney inaudibly instructs him to stand. The judge takes note of the lack of respect. Shelby turns to her friends not pleased with the first day of trial.

SHELBY

(disappointed)  
Exhausted already.

RISSA

I'm proud of you.

KASEY

Definitely calls for a drink afterwards.

SHELBY

Mexican and margaritas?

RISSA

Like there is any other option.

The friends exit the courtroom.

INT. OUTSIDE THE COURTROOM - 10 MINUTES LATER CONTINUOUS

Shelby's attorney comes up to her and delivers news.

SHELBY'S PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY

Mr. Smith has bought time with his coughing antics. He is going to the ER for choking.

RISSA

Hope he chokes on his.

SHELBY

Rissa.

SHELBY'S PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY

We reconvene Thursday morning.

SHELBY

Why am I not surprised?

RISSA

He will have his day. Believe it.

KASEY

Matter of time. He can't keep coughing his way out of this one.

SHELBY'S PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY

Get some rest. I'll call you tomorrow with any updates.

SHELBY

Thank you.

The friends call it an early day and exit the courthouse.

TWO YEARS LATER

EXT. DELLA FAYE ACADEMY - SUNNY AFTERNOON

Denise is on stage in a RED POWER SUIT SPEAKING for ribbon cutting ceremony. 250 white chairs adorning red bows are filled with people aligned on lush green lawns. Denise and Kasey hold a GIANT RED RIBBON as Rissa CUTS it. LOUD APPLAUSE and WHISTLES. Shelby is sitting in the audience front row with Sienna and Violet.

DENISE

Thank you all for coming. Roughly 40 percent of LGBTQ youth are homeless. We need change. Della Faye Academy provides free education, housing, community and safe space...

RAPID GUN FIRE as PEOPLE SCATTER RUNNING and SCREAMING. There is an unidentified shooter on the roof of the school. Kasey BURSTS off the stage to join Shelby and take the girls to safety. Rissa turns to see Denise laying lifeless on the stage. Rissa RUNS to CRADLE Denise in her arms SOBBING and SCREAMING UNCONTROLLABLY.

CONTINUOUS SIRENS as SWAT POLICE SWARM the scene. HELICOPTER flying above. One SWAT TEAM goes around to the back of the school.

Rissa still cradles Denise, SOBBING.

RISSA

No! Stay with me.

INSERT SWAT RADIO:

RADIO MESSAGE heard on SWAT officer's radio *Gunman has been shot, weapons secured, keep area clear.*



BACK TO SCENE:

The officer tries to PRY Rissa away from Denise, but she won't let go. Two more SWAT officers come to assist, lift Rissa up as she collapses out cold.

INT. DALLAS HOSPITAL PRIVATE ROOM - LATE EVENING

Rissa is groggily opening her eyes. Kasey and Shelby are SITTING on either side of Rissa's hospital bed, each holding her hands.

RISSA  
Where am I?

SHELBY  
You're in the hospital darlin.

RISSA  
(Panicked) Denise?

KASEY  
She's in ICU. Critical condition.

RISSA  
This can't be happening. (Panick)  
The girls?

SHELBY  
They are safe with Morgan.

KASEY  
You were shot in the leg and passed  
out from the blood loss.

RISSA  
Do the girls know?

KASEY  
Not yet. I.

RISSA  
I want to tell them.

SHELBY  
Morgan can bring them in the  
morning.

RISSA  
The others?

KASEY

We lost five and thirty-one were injured. No names until families notified.

SHELBY

The gunman was killed.

Somewhat relieved, Rissa passed back out. Shelby exits to grab snacks. Kasey CALLS MORGAN on his CELL PHONE to give an update.

KASEY

You Aunt Rissa woke up, but is resting.

MORGAN (O.S.)

I'll take a Lyft with the girls in the morning.

KASEY

I love you kiddo.

Kasey ends the CALL as Shelby re-enters the room. Kasey is SILENTLY CRYING as Shelby walks over to console him.

KASEY (CONT'D)

Rissa has always been my rock. Especially after Doug died.

Aunt June appears in the corner of the hospital room.

AUNT JUNE

Hate crimes must stop. Sexual orientation crimes report even higher instances than race and religion. We have to change (pleading with camera). What the hell does it matter what someone else does with their own life. Go live yours. And love one another.

INT. HOSPITAL - MORNING

Morgan arrives with Sienna and Violet, anxious to see their Moms because they sense something is wrong. They CLASP HANDS.

INT. RISSA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Morgan, Sienna and Violet enter Rissa's hospital room. Kasey is holding Rissa's hand. The twin girls rush to Rissa.

SIENNA AND VIOLET  
(Scared) Are you ok?

SIENNA  
(Worried) Your leg?

Rissa sits up a bit and ponders before she speaks.

RISSA  
There was a shooting. My leg was  
struck by a bullet. I'm ok.

SIENNA  
Where's Mom?

VIOLET  
Is she ok?

RISSA  
Mom was badly injured.

SIENNA  
(Sensing something is wrong) Can we  
see her?

Rissa fights to stay strong for their girls.

VIOLET  
(Worried) Momma?

RISSA  
(Clears throat) Mom's is in ICU.  
She is hooked up to lots of  
machines. Uncle Kasey can have the  
nurses take us up.

Rissa fights hard to keep tears away. Sienna crawls into bed  
with Rissa on one side as Violet crawls in on the other side.

Kasey exits for the nurses station to inquire about them  
seeing Denise. The nurses make a call up to ICU and Kasey  
returns to Rissa's room.

INT. RISSA'S HOSPITAL ROOM DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Shelby opens Rissa's hospital room door and motions to Kasey.

SHELBY  
Academy is closed until  
investigation is complete. Anything  
you need?

KASEY

I know she's strong, but I might need your help.

SHELBY

Anything.

Kasey finally breaks down CRYING and Shelby guides him to a nearby chair. SILENT TEARS stream down Shelby's face.

KASEY

What if she doesn't make it?

SHELBY

We can't say that. We pray. Hard.

The nurse comes over. It's ok to go up and see Denise.

The ICU nurses inaudibly talk to Kasey as Rissa is wheeled to Denise's room by Shelby, the girls slowly following behind.

Denise is pale, hooked to machines, one beeping.

RISSA

(heartbroken)

We're all here Mom.

SIENNA

We love you.

Violet is quiet, scared. Shelby stays strong. Kasey watches from the room windows, letting them have privacy.

Shelby rolls Rissa right up against Denise's bed. Rissa holds Denise's cold pale hand.

RISSA

You would hate how cold your hands are.

SIENNA

(addressing Rissa)

Can I hold Mom's other hand?

Violet keeps a small distance. She grabs Shelby's hand tight.

RISSA

Rest. You have to come home soon.

Sienna studies her Momma and Mom intensely. Kasey enters.

KASEY

She would hate the gown, isn't V neck.

Kasey puts a hand on Rissa's shoulder.

INT. DALLAS HOSPITAL - 2 DAYS LATER LATE MORNING

Discharge for Rissa as a NURSE helps her into a WHEELCHAIR. Kasey is pulling up his FORD F-150 KING RANCH truck. Shelby is intently listening to the NURSE'S INSTRUCTIONS. Rissa is quiet.

NURSE

Ensure she does her daily exercises for her recovery. Call the Doctor's office with any questions.

SHELBY

Thank you for taking care of my family the past 2 days.

NURSE

(Smiling) You're welcome. Prayers for her wife's recovery.

Nurse hands DISCHARGE PAPERWORK and CRUTCHES to Shelby. Kasey RACES out to help load Rissa in the front seat. Shelby climbs in the back seat. Kasey starts to drive as Rissa starts to have an ANXIETY attack.

Kasey and Shelby lock eyes in the rearview mirror.

RISSA

Can't...breathe.

Kasey pulls over and tries to CALM his sister. He remembers this feeling when Doug died. Shelby feels helpless.

KASEY

Deep breaths. Look at me.

SHELBY

We got you. Just breathe.

KASEY

Slow your breathing (breathing with her). Focus on the time (points to his dashboard). That's it.

30 minutes later according to time on Kasey's dash. Rissa is breathing normally. Kasey resumes driving. Shelby puts a hand on Rissa's shoulder.

RISSA

How do I go home without her?

KASEY

We will visit every day.

RISSA

As soon as able, I am demanding to sleep in her room.

SHELBY

I can be persuasive.

Kasey turns on the radio and a SAM SMITH SONG is on. That is Rissa's favorite artist and she wakes up.

KASEY

The only man you will ever love.  
Besides me.

Rissa's pain meds are kicking in and she is getting sleepy.

RISSA

(Drowzy) I could use some Sam right now.

SAM SMITH SONG CONTINUES.

SHELBY

I bought tickets for us last week for his October show.

Rissa gives a quick squeeze to Shelby's hand on her shoulder.

INT. RISSA & DENISE'S HOME - LATER MORNING

Kasey opens the door and Rissa is painfully aware the house is totally empty. The girls are at school.

RISSA

(addressing Kasey)  
Stay with me tonight?

KASEY

I am not going anywhere.

SHELBY

I would love to stay if that's ok?

Rissa nods her head.

KASEY

I ordered food so you can take your meds. Should be here any minute.

SHELBY  
Can I get you anything?

RISSA  
My bed.

INT. RISSA & DENISE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Rissa's PHONE is ringing, but she doesn't hear it. Kasey picks it up when he sees it's the hospital calling.

KASEY  
(on phone)  
We will be right there.

Kasey tries to wake Rissa. Shelby is already up and comes to check about the phone ringing.

SHELBY  
Everything ok?

KASEY  
Denise coded. Stable, but not sure  
how long. Help me get Rissa up?

Kasey and Shelby sit Rissa up. She groggily awakens.

RISSA  
What's happening?

KASEY  
We need to go. Denise is  
struggling.

SHELBY  
I'll call the Gunderson's. They can  
bring the girls from their  
sleepover.

EXT. KASEY'S F-150 KING RANCH TRUCK - EARLY MORNING

Kasey is driving. Rissa is in the passenger seat. Shelby is in the middle back seat. Kasey is speeding down the freeway as a police car clocks him speeding.

The police car turns on SIRENS as he chases after Kasey.

Kasey doesn't stop. He pulls right under the hospital entrance as Shelby jumps out to get Rissa out safely with her crutches.

The officer tries to stop the girls as Rissa yells.

RISSA  
My wife might die!

Shelby ushers Rissa into the nearby WHEELCHAIR. Rissa holds her crutches as Shelby runs with the wheelchair.

Kasey begrudgingly stays to deal with the police officer.

**FADE TO BLACK**