

THE ADVOCATE

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OVER DARKNESS:

A voice thick with contempt and incongruity:

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
So you have no actual medical
training?

CUT IN --

CLOSE ON FRANCIS "FRANKIE" REESE (38) - - CAMERA POV

A lioness ready to perpetually pounce, she stares at you with unblinking and incendiary eyes. Focused. Feral. Fierce.

FRANKIE
You'd be surprised what you can
pick up from watching "Grey's
Anatomy."

WIDER to see she talks to a humorless DOCTOR. We're in:

INT. NURSE STATION - - BARLOW RESPIRATORY HOSPITAL - - DAY

Doctors and nurses buzz past Frankie - who's laser-focused on the intransigent doc.

DOCTOR DICKHEAD
How does one become a...what did
you call yourself?

FRANKIE
A medical advocate. "One" does a
very revolutionary thing: "One"
cares for the patient.

DOCTOR DICKHEAD
You're a very angry woman...

FRANKIE
It's called passion.
(as he walks away)
Run along now...
(calls after him)
I'll see you tomorrow because I'm
not going anywhere until my client
gets a bed!

Frankie's gaze pivots to the head nurse - who glares back.

HEAD NURSE
We *will* call security.

FRANKIE

You already have. Last shift. No dice. I didn't go to medical school, but I did go to law school.

HEAD NURSE

What is it you want, ma'am?

FRANKIE

(taps file)

Julie Tamber. You have ten beds here, *empty* beds. She needs one. This is not a difficult equation.

HEAD NURSE

(a robot)

Those beds are for non-Medicare patients, ma'am.

Frankie smiles, a wolf baring her fangs. Off a name tag:

FRANKIE

(sweet as pie)

Shirley. What time do you get off your shift?

HEAD NURSE

Another hour. Why?

INT. HALLWAY - - HOSPITAL - - 59 MINUTES LATER

Frankie sits on a bench, studying the clock on the wall as she talks on her Samsung:

FRANKIE

...I'm still here, Tommy. Call your mom. Love you.

She disconnects. Hustles down the hall to see another nurse behind the station. A black male.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Hi, I'm --

MALE NURSE

Oh, I know all about you.

FRANKIE

Infamy, nice. We have a client --

MALE NURSE

(overlapping)

Chronic Pulmonary Disease...

FRANKIE

-- that's right. You read the chart?

MALE NURSE

That's my job. I'm working my way through med school. Gotta read everything.

FRANKIE

You're gonna make one hell of a doctor.

MALE NURSE

Why do you say that?

FRANKIE

I can just tell.

(back to it)

Our client, she's being released from UCLA today. Any minute now. With the proper facility, like this, she can get better.

He looks at the file. Looks at all those empty beds.

MALE NURSE

How long you been waiting here?

FRANKIE

Nineteen hours, 23 minutes. I'll be here until hell freezes over. And then I'll wait on the ice.

He chuckles. Studies her. *Feels* her determination. Finally:

MALE NURSE

If you can get UCLA to incur the transport cost and --

Frankie hugs him. He's startled. Then amused.

MALE NURSE (CONT'D)

Now you still have to get your client --

FRANKIE

She's on her way.

MALE NURSE

...How'd you know I'd cave?

FRANKIE

I could just tell. You were our
last hope.

She starts to call the office to let them know...

MALE NURSE

Frankie, right? Leave me your card.
If I'm ever sick, I sure as hell
want you working for me.

Off the twinkle in Frankie's eye, we SOUND ADVANCE the poppy
confections of Maroon 5's "Sugar," and --

EXT/INT. BASKETBALL COURT - - FAIRFAX HIGH SCHOOL - - NIGHT

Prom night. Music booming. Bodies grinding.

A progressive lower middle class vibe. Amongst the
promiscuous posers, we find LACY JIMENEZ, shy and soulful as
all 16-year-olds should be. The bony body and braces don't
help. But she's with her date, an equally awkward lad, who
summons the gumption to lead her to the dance floor.

And we watch as they make fleeting eye-contact, the boy
bouncing in a way intended to simulate dancing. Lacy smiles
before stepping closer. And just as she starts to move --

-- She drops. Faints. Collapses.

With the music blaring and kids shouting, Lacy's date is
utterly frozen, staring at Lacy's limp body before finally a
teacher notices and runs in to assist.

WIDE SHOT: Gradually people take note; they stop dancing,
stepping away as if Lacy was contagious. And belatedly the
music stops, allowing us to hear --

TEACHER

-- Somebody do something, call
somebody!

Off this harrowing, desperate image, we **FADE TO BLACK** and...

Insert Title Card: THE ADVOCATE

CUT IN --

INT. MEDICAL ADVOCACY OFFICES - - MORNING

BAM! Frankie elbows the door open, a bag of Dunkin Donuts
Munchkins and 3 cups of coffee in hand. Greeted by --

BRETT

You always do know how to make an entrance...

BRETT (31, immaculate, possibly gay) commands the reception desk, accepting the donuts with alacrity.

FRANKIE

I return, the conquering hero...

We REVERSE to see she says this to a sleeping DR. RYAN CLARKE (31, unknowingly gorgeous, a lion at rest). Through office glass, we see a tall suited man on the phone (os).

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

(re: Ryan)

Another all-nighter?

BRETT

You missed the snoring when I first came in.

And we get a good look at the understated offices as Frankie strolls over to Ryan. Quietly placing a coffee cup down on her cluttered desk - which instantly wakes Ryan.

RYAN

-- Tamber?

FRANKIE

She's safe and sound. Already showing signs of improvement.

Ryan and Frankie high-five.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Why didn't you go home?

RYAN

(grumbles)

Research.

FRANKIE

Something happen? You have a laptop.

RYAN

You'd be amazed how comfortable these chairs are. Nothing happened.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

We're all going to be sleeping here if things don't turn around soon...

CHRIS HOLIDAY (37, tall, strapping, looks more like an investment banker than a health professional).

FRANKIE

Why do you have to spoil the moment?

CHRIS

Because the moment, all our moments, are pro bono. We've been operational for 3 months now; we need paying clients.

(off Frankie)

Look, I'm happy we got this woman a bed but I'd be happier if we got compensated for it. Contrary to rumor, virtue is not its own reward. Is that my coffee?

FRANKIE

You gonna reimburse me for it?

Chris smirks. Takes the coffee. Sips. Burns his tongue. *Ouch.*

CHRIS

I really think we need a marketing presence...

RYAN

That's business school BS. The only way we're going to get business is word of mouth. And that takes time.

And just then a 30-something Latina woman sheepishly enters. This is ROSA JIMENEZ, Lacy's mom. And so rare is a client at this point that every eye stares at her until --

BRETT

Um, do you have an appointment?

FRANKIE

Brett.

(to Rosa)

I'm Frankie. This is Dr. Ryan Clarke...she's the brains of the operation.

ROSA

And what are you?

RYAN

(answers before Frankie can)

The muscle.

ROSA

I heard about you from Jim Bennett
at work. He said you helped him.

Ryan shoots Chris a look as if to say *see, word of mouth?*
before he returns to the confines of his office glass.

RYAN

Have a seat, Mrs...?

ROSA

Jimenez. Miss. Call me Rosa,
please.

(she sits on the couch)

It's my daughter. She's 16. She
fainted a month ago. Last night,
her first prom...

*FLASH CUT TO -- Little Lacy, barely conscious, is loaded into
the back of an ambulance as her classmates gather around,
snickering. This will not help her in matters of popularity.*

RYAN

(sees files in Rosa's
hand)

You brought her medical records?

ROSA

I keep them in my car. She's had a
tough year. She just got over the
measles a few weeks ago.

RYAN

Do you mind?

Rosa hands over the files...Ryan sorts through them.

ROSA

Her pediatrician at the clinic said
it's dehydration. Another doctor
told us it was from an ear
infection. I don't know where else
to go. They say she's fine, then it
happens again.

Chris has reemerged from his office, sharking towards the bag
of Dunkins Donuts on Brett's desk.

FRANKIE

(to Ryan)

They run tests...?

RYAN
 (low)
Not all of them.

ROSA
 I want to be up front
 about...payment.

With this, Chris stops, hand literally in the donut bag, gaze shifted up, brow reflexively furrowed.

ROSA (CONT'D)
 I'm an executive assistant at the
 firm Mr. Bennett runs. I'm a single
 mom...I can't afford the rates he
 paid.

FRANKIE
 That's usually decided by our
 financial partner...
 (to Chris)
 ...Christopher, can I introduce you
 to someone?

A sheepish Chris, donut in mouth, stops. Walks over.

CHRIS
 (shakes hands)
 Hi. Chris Holiday...

FRANKIE
 Rosa here was inquiring as to a
 payment schedule...

Chris looks at Rosa and instantly all his resolve fades.

CHRIS
 We can...we'll work all that out.

Ryan and Frankie suppress smiles.

ROSA
 I would have had her come in with
 me but she gets so dizzy after.

FRANKIE
 She's here now?

EXT. SECOND FLOOR - - STRIP MALL - - MORNING

Ryan, Frankie and Rosa make their way down stairs (notice the Quizno's below), towards a Toyota - where we see Lacy - who disgorges from the car.

Ryan and Frankie are stunned by Lacy's enervated state; this little girl in the ruffled prom dress. A heartbreaking sight.

FRANKIE

We're gonna get you better,
sweetheart.

Lacy looks at her with trepidation; she's heard that before.

RYAN (V.O.)

You can't do that...

INT. RYAN'S SUV - - MOVING

Ryan drives, Frankie rides shotgun. In the back, we see a pyramid of medical files, clothes and food wrappers.

FRANKIE

...Can't do what?

RYAN

"We're gonna get you better,
sweetheart."

Ryan checks the rear-view: sees Rosa's Toyota following.

FRANKIE (O.S.)

Why not?

RYAN

Because what if we can't? I mean, I don't even know that we can get her into this hospital.

FRANKIE

If Andrews is on we can...

RYAN

Don't. Start.

FRANKIE

You're gorgeous. Use it.

Up ahead, we see UCLA Medical Center in Santa Monica coming into view...

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Speaking of your many
suitors...what's going on with you
and Chris?

RYAN

We're not together anymore.

FRANKIE

Thanks, I know that. Have you noticed, he'll only come out into the main offices when I'm there?

RYAN

I've noticed.

FRANKIE

Grab a coffee with him. Nothing worse than a man scorned. Their egos can't take it.

Ryan pulls into the garage, and we --

INT. HALLWAY - - ER - - UCLA - - CONTINUOUS

Ryan confers with the aforementioned DR. ANDREWS - who beholds her with exalted glee. Frankie watches from down the hall, Rosa and Lacy close by.

DR. ANDREWS

...with their medical plan and based on these records, there's no compelling reason to admit her, Dr. Clarke.

FRANKIE (O.S.)

Call her Ryan...

Frankie passes on her way to the coffee machine down the hall

DR. ANDREWS

(likes the sound of that)
Ryan...

RYAN

Dr. Clarke is fine. I'm just asking you keep her overnight to run some basic tests. EKG. Blood work.

Frankie returns, coffee cup in hand.

FRANKIE

I can't take this. Bottom-line: you let her this girl in, run those tests and Ryan will go out with you. Like on a date.

Andrews eyes expand with excitement at the prospect. Ryan looks comparatively horrified.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

...Right, Ryan?

Andrews and Frankie wait for an answer. Finally:

RYAN
 (Dear God, no)
 Yes.

Off Andrews' buoyant smile, we --

INT. ROOM - - UCLA - - CONTINUOUS

Lacy sits in bed (her mom's brought her favorite stuffed animal, an old tattered bear - which sits next to her), Rosa beside her, holding her hand.

INT. HALLWAY - - UCLA - - CONTINUOUS

Ryan and Frankie walk down the corridor...

RYAN
 ...where does it end? - are you
 going to have me performing sexual
 services for our clients?

FRANKIE
 If it would help, I'd hope you'd
 volunteer.

RYAN
 You're single. Why aren't you
 offering your services?

FRANKIE
 'Cus I'm a professional.

They laugh before entering Lacy's room...Lacy tries to hide the stuffed animal but...

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
 (re: teddy bear)
 Who's this guy?

ROSA
 Bongo.

LACY
 Mom.

FRANKIE
 Bongo's cute. He's been through a
 lot, I bet.

LACY
 I've had him since I was 3.

FRANKIE

I have one I've had since I was 5.
"Dumdum." Every once in a while,
when I'm scared, I pull him out of
the closet.

This makes Lacy smile (Ryan watches with admiration).

ROSA

I'll be right back, sweetheart.

She walks Ryan and Frankie out into THE HALLWAY...

ROSA (CONT'D)

She's on the swim team this year.
It was a big deal for her. And she
loves it. They have their first
meet in a few days...

RYAN

Let's see what comes back.

FRANKIE

We'll do everything we can.

She ganders back into the room to see (POV) a scared Lacy
clutching her teddy bear.

INT. HALLWAY - - HOSPITAL - - LATER

Frankie chuckles to herself, watching from down the corridor
as Ryan has to awkwardly confer with Dr. Andrews. She turns
back and catches sight of --

A DOCTOR

Embarking on an elevator. He turns to face Frankie - who's
face goes dark as their eyes meet.

The elevator doors close, and we -- *FLASHBACK TO:*

INT. SOHO HOUSE - - HOLLYWOOD - - CONTINUOUS

*An agency party. For the Emmy's. Or Oscars. Or who gives a
fuck. Packed with beautiful people doing ugly things. And
among them we're almost surprised to find*

FRANKIE

*A year ago. Her hair's longer, her dress (Isabel Marant, if
you must know) shorter. And she's pressing the flesh, moving
elegantly through the party.*

Only now do we realize that Frankie used to be a Hollywood talent agent.

And we recognize some famous faces as we TRACK through this shindig, Frankie literally bumping into a PRICK ACTOR (John Cusack? Ashton Kutcher? Jeremy Piven? Take your pick) --

PRICK ACTOR
Frankie! I was looking for you.
Congratulations on the year.

He stops. Squints at her. Leans closer.

PRICK ACTOR (CONT'D)
(points to his face)
Listen, whatever's going on here, I
got a great plastic surgeon for
you. Lemme know.

With that, he disappears into the unwashed masses and Frankie turns around, catching her reflection off a trophy case (filled with Emmys). Off the reflection, we see the left side of her face is significantly drooping, before --

RYAN (V.O.)
You okay?

INT. HALLWAY - - HOSPITAL - - CONTINUOUS

Back to the present. Frankie's reverie broken, she walks with Ryan towards the elevator. We stay behind but hear:

FRANKIE
Peachy.

RYAN
He's taking me out Saturday night.

FRANKIE
That'll be fun.

RYAN
Shut up.

Frankie laughs, and we --

INT. FRANKIE'S HOME - - CONTINUOUS

Frankie enters. Calls out:

FRANKIE
Tommy!

TOMMY (O.S.)

In here...

Sorting through the mail, she continues into THE KITCHEN - where we find her 16-year-old son, TOMMY (handsome, fastidious and old before his time).

FRANKIE

What're you doing?

In an apron, he's masterfully working the stove.

TOMMY

I made dinner.

FRANKIE

I thought we'd order in from that pizza place you like...

TOMMY

I'm taking that cooking class, so I figured...

Seeing the table's already set, she pulls an envelope from the stack. Shows her son the return address.

FRANKIE

Your grades, I assume. Drum roll...

She opens it. He continues cooking, unconcerned.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

...Jesus Christ, kiddo.

TOMMY

What?

She hands him the report card and we see nothing but A's.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(a shrug)

It's no big deal.

FRANKIE

You know I'm proud of you.

TOMMY

Why do I feel a "but" coming on...?

FRANKIE

I'm fine now. You and I got through everything together. I want you to be a 16-year-old. Enjoy your life.

TOMMY

I am. I do. Sit down. I made Steak Florentine with a side of charred broccolini and fingerling potatoes.

Off Frankie, alternately proud and concerned, we --

INT. BAR AND GRILL - - WESTWOOD - - CONTINUOUS

Ryan and Chris sit at a table in the dimly lit restaurant.

CHRIS

...so what'd you wanna talk about?

RYAN

I'm feeling some atmosphere at work.

CHRIS

What does that mean?

RYAN

You know what it means. We said when we started hooking up that we'd never let it interfere with work...

CHRIS

And it hasn't. It didn't.

(then)

"Hooking up?" You talk like a 15 year-old.

RYAN

(ignores that)

We had fun.

CHRIS

You obviously did. A lot of fun.

RYAN

And what does *that* mean? We never said we were exclusive.

CHRIS

Well, we didn't say we were going to "hook up" with the entire Clippers starting lineup, either...

RYAN

Oh, that's mature...

She stands. Tosses some cash on the table.

RYAN (CONT'D)
I'm the 15-year-old?

He watches her recede, regret already settling in as a waitress sashays over...

WAITRESS
...Have you decided what you want?

CHRIS
(almost to himself)
I have no idea...

INT. LIVING ROOM - - FRANKIE'S HOUSE - - NIGHT

Post dinner, Frankie loiters on the couch, paperwork spread all about as she ganders into the next room to see

TOMMY

Hunkered over the kitchen table. So studious, so focused, it scares her. She hollers out --

FRANKIE
You seeing your dad this weekend?

TOMMY
Huh?

FRANKIE
Your father.

TOMMY
He has that golf tournament, remember?

FRANKIE
Maybe we can go see a movie or something.

TOMMY
If I can get through these early admissions applications.

Frankie smirks. Stands. Stretches. Her cell chimes (off caller ID, we see a goofy picture of Ryan).

FRANKIE
(answers cell)
Did you crazy kids clear the air?

RYAN (V.O.)
It's Lacy.

INT. APARTMENT - - CONTINUOUS

Ryan's on the edge of her bed, sheet wrapped around her.
Asleep beside her the acute eye will see a man (not Chris).

Intercut as necessary:

RYAN

...They released her from the
hospital.

FRANKIE

Where is she now?

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - - NORTH HOLLYWOOD - - NIGHT

Rosa holds her unconscious daughter (who has clearly just
fainted) on the pavement outside their home. A laceration on
her head pours blood as Rosa shouts to anyone and no one:

ROSA

HELP! HELP ME, PLEASE!

Frantic, she tries to wake her daughter, as we...

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO**INT. ER - - UCLA MEDICAL CENTER - - NIGHT**

BAM! Double doors slap open, a gurney being wheeled desperately down a corridor (you know the shot). PAN DOWN to see a woman with multiple gunshot wounds. Not Lacy.

But we linger behind when the gurney passes and PUSH INTO --

INT. ROOM - - UCLA - - CONTINUOUS

Lacy. Conscious. On a bed, a bandage on her forehead from the cut incurred from her fall.

A nurse takes her blood pressure as an anguished Rosa fights the maternal urge to weep. Frankie rubs her back, whispers:

FRANKIE

We're gonna take care of her...

Lacy puts on a brave face as she watches the sleeve deflate. Frankie notices Ryan stewing in the doorway. Goes to her.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

At least you don't have to go out with Andrews now.

RYAN

I'd take a long weekend with him if it meant figuring out what she has.

(then)

They released her last night because all the tests - the EKG, the blood work, all of it - showed nothing.

FRANKIE

She hit her head.

RYAN

Observant.

FRANKIE

My point is, let's get them to run a CAT scan. See if it picks up anything in the process.

RYAN

(a beat)

You would've made a hell of a doctor.

FRANKIE

Except for that part about not having a medical degree.

RYAN

Medical school doesn't make you smart. Life, genetics do.

(then)

Let's not tell Chris about the CAT scan 'cus guess who's gonna foot that bill?

FRANKIE

Speaking of Chris...

INT. HALLWAY - - ER - - UCLA - - CONTINUOUS

Frankie and Ryan share a hot cocoa as they sit in the corridor, passing the cup back and forth.

RYAN

You were right. It was a mistake to ever go out with him.

FRANKIE

What do I know? - I think you guys have chemistry.

RYAN

Chemistry. Overrated.

FRANKIE

Is he good in bed?

RYAN

I'm not gonna answer that.

(then)

Yes.

(before Frankie can ask a follow-up)

Stop. Here we go...

This on sight of Dr. Andrews as he approaches...

DR. ANDREWS

I know you're upset but these beds cost upwards of 70K a night and all tests indicate there's nothing wrong with her.

RYAN

Aside from frequently passing out and losing consciousness.

DR. ANDREWS
I'm sure there's an explanation.

FRANKIE
Isn't it your job to find out what
it is?

DR. ANDREWS
You might want to take a
psychiatric approach.

FRANKIE
Of course. Her father leaving when
she was 3 makes her pass out.

DR. ANDREWS
It's very possible that all this is
stress-induced.

FRANKIE
My God are you full of shit.

Andrews exhales. Turns to Frankie. Calmly:

DR. ANDREWS
We have yet to be formally
introduced. Royce Andrews, MD.

FRANKIE
Frankie. Doctorate in BS Detection.

Andrews doesn't know how to react. Simply looks uncomfortable
before belatedly retreating.

RYAN
I wish I could do that...

FRANKIE
What?

RYAN
Repel.

FRANKIE
Years of practice, honey.

Ryan moves back towards Lacy's room. Frankie stays behind,
gaze going to an examination room, as we -- *FLASHBACK TO:*

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - - CEDARS-SINAI - - CONTINUOUS

*START ON A COMPACT-MIRROR VIEW OF FRANKIE'S FACE.
Specifically the left side - which droops even more than when
we saw it in the last flashback. She slaps the mirror closed -*

WIDER: Frankie, typically resplendent in a Stella McCartney shift dress, sits on an examination table as a DOCTOR walks in. We recognize him as the man that induced the first flashback. This is DR. CHAMBERS (45).

DR. CHAMBERS

Frankie, I understand your concern.

FRANKIE

My concern is that you said last time Bell's Palsy goes away after a few weeks, right? It's been five months. - Shit, hang on. Sorry...

(answers her ringing BlackBerry)

I'm at the doctor's. Okay...

(motions "one minute" to Chambers)

Todd. I'm gonna pay you the compliment of candor: It's a dog. You can release it anywhere you want but it won't be with Scarlett's name on it. You figure it out. That's not my problem. My advice? Make better movies.

She disconnects the call. Without missing a beat:

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

...You were saying?

DR. CHAMBERS

Bell's Palsy does endure in some cases - usually induced by stress.

FRANKIE

I've been an agent for 15 years --

DR. CHAMBERS

I'm not talking about the job. I'm talking about your brother. Losing someone you love is about the most stressful thing you can go through.

FRANKIE

That was months ago.

DR. CHAMBERS

Just about the time you started showing signs of Bell's.

Again, she retrieves the compact-mirror. Again, she studies the droopage with great concern. A vulnerable moment:

FRANKIE

*There's only so much mascara can
hide.*

*(slaps the compact mirror
closed)*

Is there anything we can do?

DR. CHAMBERS

Take a vacation, Frankie.

FRANKIE

*You know what stresses me out?
Vacations.*

Her BlackBerry chimes anew, as we AUDIO MATCH CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - - UCLA - - CONTINUOUS

The present. Ryan's ringing iPhone brings Frankie back, watching as Ryan sends it to voicemail.

FRANKIE

Who was that?

RYAN

Somebody I didn't want to talk to.

FRANKIE

A man?

RYAN

Man-child, more like it.

FRANKIE

You're the least sexual sexual
person I've ever met. Are you using
protection?

RYAN

Oh my God.

FRANKIE

I can get you birth control pills.
I have medical connections.

RYAN

Shhhhhhh.

This because Rosa and Lacy are coming down the hall...

ROSA

I really appreciate all you guys
have tried to do.

FRANKIE
We're not done trying.

ROSA
They say she's alright. The brain
test they did.

LACY
They even cleared me for the swim
meet tomorrow.

Which excites the little girl. And visibly concerns Frankie.

FRANKIE
(offers hand to Lacy)
Come on, sweetheart. Let's go get
you a hot cocoa for the ride home.

She shepherds Lacy further down the hall, leaving Ryan to
confer with Rosa.

ROSA
I took her to a psychiatrist last
year...

RYAN
I don't think it's psychological.

ROSA
The people that are supposed to
know, don't know...so they just
send us off and hope for the best.

RYAN
We're not leaving anything to
chance.

ROSA
I just need to know she's okay. She
deserves that.

They cast a collective glance down the corridor to see
Frankie playing with a giggling Lacy.

ROSA (CONT'D)
They tell me she's okay, so you
know what? I'm gonna believe them.
I can't keep doing this. To her. To
me. No offense, but I'd be
perfectly happy to never see
another doctor again.

With that, she continues down the hallway, and we -- FADE TO:

EXT. TITO'S TACOS - - THE NEXT DAY

Laptop booted up (a newspaper over it to shield from the California sun), Ryan does research as Frankie devours a taco. Noticing Ryan hasn't touched hers --

FRANKIE

You gonna eat that?

RYAN

(head still in laptop)
Go for it. How do you stay so
skinny and eat like that?

FRANKIE

Angst.

(then)

I wanna know how do you do that...

RYAN

Do what?

FRANKIE

Research. I see you get lost in it.

RYAN

It's how it's always worked for me.
I study the data. Over and over
again and then, if I'm lucky, the
answer comes to me.

A large, tattoo-addled Hispanic man talks LOUDLY into the speaker of his cell at the next table.

And Frankie thinks about letting it slide. But she wouldn't be Frankie if she did...

FRANKIE

(to Latino Man)

Sir, can you please speak louder?

LARGE LATINO MAN

What?

FRANKIE

Can you speak louder, please?
There's some folks in Orange County
that can't hear you...

RYAN

(a whisper)

Frankie...

LARGE LATINO MAN
 (cups phone; stands)
 What'd you say to me?

FRANKIE
 I said, you're speaking so loud our
 table is vibrating.

The thuggish man glares at Frankie. But there's no backdown
 in this woman. After a moment, he moves further away to talk.

RYAN
 How do you do that?

FRANKIE
 Jedi mind trick.
 (then)
 Most people don't like
 confrontation.

RYAN
 And you?

FRANKIE
 Most people.
 (off watch)
 Speaking of confrontation, I have
 to go meet my ex...
 (she stands)
 If you need me...

Head bowed in the laptop, Ryan gives a nod as Frankie
 recedes. Frankie waves "bye" to the large thug as she goes

Off Ryan, intensely studying her screen, we -- MATCH CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL ADVOCACY OFFICES - - LATER

Now on her PC, Ryan continues to sift through medical
 research. This is when she's most in her element, most at
 ease. Body loose. Eyes engaged.

BRETT (O.S.)
 Ryan...?

She breaks from her research-infused reverie to behold Brett
 standing over her desk...

BRETT (CONT'D)
 ...there's a guy named "Zane" on
 the phone for you.

RYAN
 Tell him I don't work here anymore.

BRETT
 Seriously?

RYAN
 Seriously.

Brett starts to go. Heads back.

BRETT
 Can I say you got fired?

RYAN
 Go for it.

BRETT
 I'll make it very dramatic.

He goes back to the front desk as Ryan notices Chris listening to the conversation from his office doorway. After a moment, he goes back inside. Closes the door. PRE-LAP:

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
 So let me get this straight...

EXT. COURTYARD - - CENTURY CITY - - DAY

Frankie sits at a Coffee Bean with her ex-husband, DOUG (40s, dashing, dressed to the nines).

DOUG
 ...you're worried our son is *too* good? - you know how crazy that sounds.

FRANKIE
 That's not what I'm saying. He's just not having any fun.

DOUG
 I wonder who he got that from.
 (off Frankie)
 Sorry. He's focused, that's all. You have any idea what most parents have to deal with these days? Drugs. Sex. General stupidity.

FRANKIE
 All the things that make adolescence fun. Over the last two years, he's had to deal with a lot - least of all, our divorce. Somewhere along the line, he forgot how to be a kid.

DOUG
So remind him. I think it'd be good
for both of you.

Frankie nods. Surprised to find wisdom from this man. Perhaps even reminded of what she loved about him. Before she can smile -

DOUG (CONT'D)
Listen, I want you to hear it from
me first. Things with Roxanne have
gotten a little more serious.

FRANKIE
Who's Roxanne?

DOUG
Roxie.

FRANKIE
She looking for more credibility
with the "Roxanne?"

DOUG
She's a reporter. She has
credibility.

FRANKIE
(overlapping)
A dot com reporter.

DOUG
(blurts out)
She's gonna move in with me.

FRANKIE
You've only been seeing her like --

DOUG
Eight months. That's two months
longer than when we got engaged.

A beat.

FRANKIE
You're engaged...?

DOUG
(shit)
Not officially. I still have to ask
her but...

Frankie mutters "congratulations" before simply walking off. Leaving Doug to remember why they could never make it work.

INT. MEDICAL ADVOCACY OFFICES - - CONTINUOUS

Her desk piled high with paperwork, Ryan's frustration is palpable as she looks up to see

A HOT BLONDE WOMAN

At the reception desk, talking to Brett - who waves her back towards Chris' office.

Ryan can't help but watch as Chris exits his office, coming out to give the blonde vixen, no more than 26, a warm hug.

CHRIS

Be right back, okay?

He leaves the blonde outside in the main offices. She catches Ryan staring. Waves.

HOT BLONDE GIRL

Hi.

Ryan goes back to her research.

INT. SWIMMING POOL - - FAIRFAX HIGH SCHOOL - - CONTINUOUS

Loud. Voices amplified off the walls as students and parents cheer on the swim team. Among the team members, we see a nervous and excited Lacy.

In the bleachers, among the enthused supporters we find Rosa and Frankie. PRE-LAP:

RYAN (V.O.)

So what's the plan for today?

INT. MEDICAL ADVOCACY OFFICES - - CONTINUOUS

Ryan takes an interest in the hot blonde girl as Chris finishes up a call in his office.

HOT BLONDE GIRL

I'm not really sure. I don't know the area too well, so...

RYAN

I'm sure you guys will find something to do.

CHRIS (O.S.)

Ryan, you meet my niece?

Chris is back, suit jacket on.

RYAN
 ...Your niece?

Just then, in an instant, we see something hit Ryan. Abruptly, she slides her chair back to the PC as Chris and his niece trade eyes.

CHRIS
 She does this sometimes...

Ryan hops to her feet and runs from the offices without word or whisper. Chris and his niece trade amused expressions.

HOT BLONDE GIRL
 I like her.

CHRIS
 Yeah. Me, too.

INT. CAR - - MOVING (FAST)

Ryan fumbles with her phone as she ricochets through traffic, listening to it ring.

RYAN
 Come on, Frankie...pick-up, pick-up...

INT. SWIMMING POOL - - FAIRFAX HIGH SCHOOL - - CONTINUOUS

Frankie can't hear her cell ring over the din of the gymnasium-like space. She cheers loudly as Lacy moves towards the pool starting block.

RYAN (V.O.)
 I figured it out...

INT. CAR - - MOVING

Ryan has no choice but to leave a message:

RYAN (V.O.)
 ...She's got HCM. Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy. The medication for measles concealed the symptoms. She cannot get in that pool. Do you hear me? Her heart can't take it.

She hangs up. Hits redial.

INT. SWIMMING POOL - - FAIRFAX HIGH SCHOOL - - CONTINUOUS

Lacy. Sets on the starting block as we begin to hear the murmur of her heart beat. Growing louder and louder.

In the bleachers, Frankie heeds the chirp of her cell, belatedly answering over the gym din.

FRANKIE
(into cell)
What? I CAN'T HEAR YOU.

She gestures to Rosa before knifing down the stands, through packs of annoyed people. We don't hear what Ryan says but we see it register across Frankie's face. Panic.

And all at once, without reflex or reservation, Frankie runs towards the pool, waving her arms, shouting:

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
NO, LACY! STOP! STOP!

Seeing this, Rosa stands. Befuddled. Horrified.

Frankie keeps hustling closer but her shouts are lost in the clamor of this place. Utterly helpless when we hear the starter's pistol fire and --

-- LACY DIVES INTO THE POOL.

Off this image of impending doom, we --

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE**INT. SWIMMING POOL - - FAIRFAX HIGH SCHOOL - - CONTINUOUS**

We're in the pool. Embalmed in watery silence before -- a missile pierces the liquid ceiling above. Lacy.

INT. SWIMMING POOL - - FAIRFAX HIGH SCHOOL - - CONTINUOUS

Back with Frankie, above the water, on the periphery, watching frantically as Lacy hits the water.

In a world of fight or flight, Frankie is all fight. With half the gym watching the crazy, gesticulating woman, she kicks off her Roger Vivier heels and --

-- JUMPS INTO THE POOL.

Rosa runs down from the packed bleachers as --

-- Ryan bangs through the gym's double doors, shoving past a puff-pastry of a security guard as --

-- Frankie swims across the pool, her dress soaked and clinging as she grabs hold of a stunned Lacy...some swimmers stop, startled by what's occurring...

Lacy in her arms, Frankie treads towards the edge of the pool as suddenly Lacy starts convulsing. Several parents help lift Lacy, then Frankie out of the pool.

Sirens echo from close by as Ryan kneels down, tending to the unconscious Lacy, meeting eyes with Frankie, before we --

EXT. STREETS - - NIGHT

An ambulance races down Santa Monica Boulevard.

INT. AMBULANCE - - MOVING

Rosa holds Lacy's limp hand as paramedics work on the little girl and her mommy mutters:

ROSA
*I'm sorry...I'm sorry...I'm so
sorry...*

She's forced to relinquish her grip as the paramedics reposition around her, working to revive the little girl.

INT. CAR - - MOVING

Following behind (at a speedy clip), Ryan drives, Frankie holds on for dear life beside her.

FRANKIE

I don't understand...

RYAN

The medication she was given to treat her measles, that's what concealed all the symptoms of HCM.

FRANKIE

(re: HCM)

Is it bad?

Ryan's stern expression says it all. Yes.

RYAN

You saved her, Frankie. You don't dive into that pool and that little girl doesn't come out...

FRANKIE

We saved her. And we're gonna damn well keep doing it.

(notices outside)

...This is the hospital?

Outside we see a small and slightly shabby SANTA MONICA WELLNESS CENTER that triggers something in Frankie.

RYAN (O.S.)

'Cus I'm not leaving anything to chance, rumor or reputation...

Frankie stares at the hospital, as we -- *FLASHBACK TO:*

INT. STARBUCKS - - MORNING

Frankie, BlackBerry nuzzled in her neck, pours sugar into her coffee as someone sidles up to her at the condiment station. It takes us a moment to recognize that woman as Ryan (hair a mess, she's dressed in a torn t-shirt and baggy jeans).

Even though they're strangers at this point, Ryan keeps looking over at Frankie's face. Finally:

FRANKIE

If you take a picture, it lasts longer.

RYAN

What? Sorry.

Self-conscious, Frankie sounds almost contrite when she says:

FRANKIE
It's called Bell's Palsy.

RYAN
What is?

FRANKIE
(points to her face)
This.

Ryan looks anew, now unapologetic as Frankie renews her typically combative call.

RYAN
You don't have Bell's Palsy.

FRANKIE
(heard her just fine)
Excuse me?
(cups phone)
You a doctor?

RYAN
Yes. I have somebody you should go see...

Off Frankie, locking eyes with this stranger, some way, some how, believing her...

INT. NEUROLOGY OFFICE - - WELLNESS CENTER - - FLASHBACK

A brain scan. Right before a Sharpie circles a portion of the right side of it.

FRANKIE (O.S.)
...What're you saying?

WIDER to see Frankie's standing beside a ancient NEUROLOGIST. Bleach white hair. More wrinkles than a Mississippi road map.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
...that I have a brain tumor?

NEUROLOGIST
It's gone undetected long enough that it's started to impinge on your brain stem.

And we see something we've never detected on Frankie's face: outright fear.

FRANKIE
What does that mean...?

NEUROLOGIST

We need to get it out. Immediately.

FRANKIE

I went to the head of Neurology at Cedars. Twice. How did he miss this?

NEUROLOGIST

It happens more than you think.

The most frightening answer of all, as we PRE-LAP:

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

You saved her life...

INT. OFFICE - - WELLNESS CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

Back to the present. DR. WILMA ROLLINS (60, an aging hippy) sits behind her desk, framed copies of album covers behind her (Fleetwood Mac, Janis Joplin, Zeppelin) as she talks to Frankie and Ryan.

DR. WILMA ROLLINS

The medication concealed all the usual symptoms except for the fainting spells and the blackouts. We got very lucky here because physical exertion is usually the thing that kills people.

FRANKIE

What's her prognosis?

INT. ROOM - - WELLNESS CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

Lacy curls in with her teddy bear, fast asleep, as Rosa sobs silently beside her.

DR. WILMA ROLLINS (V.O.)

Less than great. The risk of sudden death in children with HCM is high. Very high.

INT. OFFICE - - WELLNESS CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

FRANKIE

Well, then let's treat it.

DR. WILMA ROLLINS

I wish it were that simple.

FRANKIE

Tell me why it's not. We identified it. We can treat it, right?

DR. WILMA ROLLINS

(to Ryan; sincere)

I like her.

(then; back to Frankie)

It's gone undetected for too long.

This is all too familiar for Frankie...

DR. WILMA ROLLINS (CONT'D)

Normally we'd put her on a steady diet of Beta Blockers and modify behavior but preliminary tests show that ventricular fibrillation has developed, and that means a more aggressive treatment's required.

FRANKIE

Hell, aggressive's my middle name.

DR. WILMA ROLLINS

The only treatment I know of comes in the form of a drug that's only approved for adults.

Frankie thinks for a moment. But only a moment...

FRANKIE

What company makes that drug, Doctor?

Before the good doctor can answer, we --

INT. CAFETERIA - - WELLNESS CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

WIDE: Rosa sits with Frankie and Ryan. The place is empty save a smattering of nurses and doctors.

ROSA

I'm sorry. I feel responsible...

CLOSER: Frankie reaches for her hand. Ryan watches (we get the sense she's studying Frankie's ability to comfort).

ROSA (CONT'D)

She was so sick. If you weren't there...how did you know?

FRANKIE

(thumbs to Ryan)

I knew 'cus she knew.

(MORE)

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

And when it comes to this stuff,
there's nobody better.

ROSA

Her father, he had the same
disease. It never even occurred to
me because it was so long ago that
he left.

(then; a sad laugh)

That's the only thing he ever gave
her.

(stands)

I have to get back before she wakes
up.

Frankie and Ryan stand with her.

ROSA (CONT'D)

You can make her better, yes?

RYAN

The truth is, we don't know.

That hangs heavy, as we...

INT. CAR - - MOVING

Silence. Frankie, riding shotgun, tics annoyed glances over
at Ryan behind the wheel...

RYAN

Go ahead. Out with it. The only
thing worse than you talking is you
being silent.

FRANKIE

I know you're opposed to false hope
but what about hope in general?

RYAN

I'm a pragmatist.

FRANKIE

Be an optimist. You'll live longer.
I'm going to get her that
medication, Ry.

RYAN

I know not to doubt you, Frankie,
but this one's beyond anything
we've ever dealt with.

Frankie's cell chirps to life. Off caller ID:

FRANKIE
 Tommy's school...
 (answers cell)
 Hello...when? No, I didn't know
 that. Thank you.

She hangs up, a surprised expression on her face.

RYAN
 Don't tell me the boy wonder got
 into trouble...

FRANKIE
 They're honoring him tomorrow as
 student of the year for his class.

RYAN
 Wow. That's amazing.
 (off Frankie)
 ...That's not amazing?

FRANKIE
 He knew about it all week. Never
 even told me.

Off Frankie's unmasked hurt, we...

EXT. STRIP MALL - - NIGHT

Ryan trundles up the steps, going back to the office as we see Frankie's Audi pulling away in the parking lot below. She removes her keys, about to open the door when

A MAN

Steps from the shadows. The aforementioned ZANE (30s, boyish and muscular). Startled, Ryan drops her keys.

ZANE
 You try to blow me off, huh?

Trembling, Ryan picks up her keys. Tries to open the door with them before - Zane grabs her hand.

ZANE (CONT'D)
 Where you going, bitch?

RYAN
 "Bitch." That's creative. Look, we
 had fun. Why can't that be enough?
 Move on. Where's your pride?

ZANE

You got a mouth on you. You need to learn how to treat people.

He twists her wrist, bringing her closer to him. Just as Ryan's about to scream -- the office door opens, Chris stepping out and punching Zane square in the nose...

Zane staggers back, stumbling a bit down the stairs before regaining control and trundling off.

Chris pulls Ryan close, watching as Zane runs off. And just as Ryan looks up at Chris, her knight in shining armor - -

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Chris...

A beautiful brunette, her shirt untucked, her hair ruffled, steps out into the doorway. Clearly Chris wasn't in the office working late.

Ryan looks up at Chris, a gulf between them, before we...

INT. THE PALM - - CONTINUOUS

Frankie passes the maitre-d with a knowing wink on her way to a corner table - where we see a fastidious cat with jet black hair and an Armani suit. He's a PHARMACEUTICAL EXECUTIVE.

FRANKIE

Hey, Stevie.

PHARMACEUTICAL EXEC

Frankie, looking hot as ever.

She looks pointedly down at his wedding band.

FRANKIE

How's Sylvia?

PHARMACEUTICAL EXEC

Crazy. But good.

FRANKIE

And your little girl?

PHARMACEUTICAL EXEC

Not so little anymore. Love of my life, man. I still can't tell you how much it meant to her when you got her to meet Clooney.

FRANKIE

My pleasure.

PHARMACEUTICAL EXEC

I owe you.

FRANKIE

Yes, you do.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

And that's why I'm here. It involves my new line of work.

PHARMACEUTICAL EXEC

(as he checks emails)

Oh yeah, how's that little venture going?

FRANKIE

I have a client with Hyperthropic Cardiomyopathy.

PHARMACEUTICAL EXEC

Brutal. We have a drug --

FRANKIE

Teragamen. The client's sixteen years old. Same age as your daughter, right?

PHARMACEUTICAL EXEC

Frankie. As subtle as an M1 Tank. That's a nonstarter, darling. The drug's only cleared for adults - which of course you already knew.

FRANKIE

A sample. Anything...

PHARMACEUTICAL EXEC

You were trained as a lawyer, right? - I shouldn't have to explain this to you.

FRANKIE

It's an innocent little girl.

Steve puts his napkin on the table. Slides out of the booth.

PHARMACEUTICAL EXEC

And that sucks. But I can't help you.

With that, the exec exits. Frankie's jaw clenches. This is not a woman used to taking "no" for an answer.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR**INT. BARNEY'S - - BEVERLY HILLS - - DAY**

Frankie shepherds a discomforted Ryan through the handbag department. They know Frankie here.

RYAN

...He just said "no?"

FRANKIE

It's not a moment I want to relive.
But I'll tell you this much; the
fight is far from over.
(re: handbag)
How 'bout this one?

A Balenciaga Classic Mini City Bag.

RYAN

(off price tag)
Jesus. Maybe if I decided to forego
my mortgage for a few months.

FRANKIE

We've come a long way with you but
we're still not quite there yet.

RYAN

Why do I always feel like a lab rat
when we go shopping?

They move onto the newly remodeled SHOE SECTION...

FRANKIE

(to salesman)
Ray, this is Ryan.

The Salesman hands Frankie and Ryan sparkling waters. Ryan looks as discomforted as Richard Simmons at an NFL Combine.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Your mom never took you shopping?

RYAN

Sure. All the time. For drugs. For
men. For trouble. She was a world
class shopper.

FRANKIE

You heard from her at all...?

RYAN

Wait 'til the end of the month.
When the funds start to fade.

Frankie takes that in. Then:

FRANKIE

Do we have a plan B for Lacy?

RYAN

There's a surgical option but
it's...remote.

FRANKIE

Plan A it is.

A beat.

RYAN

Do we have a Plan A?

FRANKIE

I'm still figuring it out.
(then)
These would look great for that
"casual" look you're so intent on
cultivating...

YSL slip on sneakers...

RYAN

I have sneakers. From the
international "Puma" collection.
Forty-two dollars.

FRANKIE

(a wink)
You overpaid.

MAN'S BOOMING VOICE (O.S.)

Frankie!

Frankie turns to see an enormous black man (J-NASTY), his
thick body a tapestry of tattoos. They hug.

FRANKIE

What's up, J?

J-NASTY

You know. Back in the game. How's
the new gig?

FRANKIE

Good. This is my partner, Ryan...

J-NASTY
 (re: Frankie)
 This woman right here is the truth.
 (to Frankie)
 I might give you a holler. My
 auntie ain't doing so good. Maybe
 ya'll could help her out.

FRANKIE
 Give her my number.

With that, J-Nasty and his posse recede.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
 (off Ryan)
 What can I say, I know people.
 (then; re: YSLs)
 Will you let me buy these for you?

RYAN
 Absolutely not.

Before Frankie can retort - Ryan's cell rings. Startles her.
 Even more so when she sees caller ID (os) and sends it to VM.

FRANKIE
 What's wrong?

RYAN
 Nothing.
 (off Frankie)
 Really. Nothing.

FRANKIE
 Still not buying it. Come on. Let's
 go get an overpriced latte and we
 can start to chisel away at those
 protective walls...

A beat. *Okay but...*

RYAN
 I pick the place this time...

INT. DIVE BAR - - MELROSE - - CONTINUOUS

Gary Clark, Jr's "If Trouble Were Money" plays as Ryan and
 Frankie confer at a table. We parachute in...

FRANKIE
 You need to file a police report,
 Ryan. What if Chris wasn't there?

RYAN
These kinds of guys, they move on.

FRANKIE
This has happened before?
(off Ryan's silence)
How often?

RYAN
I guess I'm a cliché, huh?

FRANKIE
There's nothing cliché about you,
sweetie.

RYAN
The doctor who tries to save the
world but can't save herself. I
look at you, and...

FRANKIE
...And what?

RYAN
You just have it all together.

FRANKIE
Really? I have a dead younger
brother who visits me in my dreams.
I have a son who thinks he needs to
be my father. I have an ex-husband
who's getting remarried - who I
might still be in love with. Oh,
and I can't really bring myself to
date - even though I've been
divorced for almost 2 years now.

They trade eyes and burst into laughter. When it fades...

RYAN
Woe is us. A couple of broken
pieces...

FRANKIE
...who fit together.

A beat.

RYAN
We have any other moves to make,
Frankie?

Before Frankie can answer, we --

INT. AUDI - - MOVING

Frankie drives, embroiled in thought. At a stoplight, she looks up at herself in the rear-view mirror, studying the side of her face that no longer droops, as we - *FLASHBACK TO:*

INT. AUDI - - STATIONARY

ANGLE ON REAR-VIEW MIRROR as Frankie with well shorn hair and emaciated eyes, spackles makeup on the side of her face (even though there's no visible drooping).

She sits back. Takes a deep breath. Here goes...

INT. LOBBY - - TALENT AGENCY - - CONTINUOUS

Body frail post surgery, Frankie steps into the lobby to see...over 100 suited men and women waiting for her. All at once, they burst into applause.

Frankie's touched, fighting back tears as a portly suit steps from the crowd and embraces her.

AGENCY PARTNER

You're sure it's not too soon?

FRANKIE

I'm sure.

AGENCY PARTNER

We're proud of you. I knew you'd beat it. I always knew you would.

Another round of applause takes us to --

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - - TALENT AGENCY - - FLASHBACK

Staff meeting. Dozens of agents assembled around a Leviathan table, Frankie given a prime seat.

AGENT #1

...with ten percent first dollar gross, he'll do just fine. I'll get him there, don't worry.

AGENT #2

They still won't budge on the on-set demands. Two personal masseuses?

Throughout this, we PUSH CLOSER to Frankie until we're CLOSE ON HER FACE. Close enough to see her pores.

AGENT #1 (O.S.)
*Let the lawyers squabble on that.
 Just lock him into the film.*

AGENT #2 (O.S.)
*If they fly him on the studio jet
 on weekends, we can make it work.*

All at once, without word or whisper, Frankie stands up and walks out of the room. Off the mystified looks exchanged --

INT. HALLWAY - - TALENT AGENCY - - FLASHBACK

The Agency Partner hustles out after her...

AGENCY PARTNER
Frankie! - what happened?

FRANKIE
I can't do it anymore, Josh.

AGENCY PARTNER
What're you talking about?

FRANKIE
*This. I've lost the ability to give
 a shit. I'm sorry.*

Before the partner can retort, we hear a LOUD HONK and --

INT. AUDI - - STATIONARY

Back to the present. Courtesy of a petulant Porsche driver behind Frankie. She wheels forward, as we --

INT. ROOM - - WELLNESS CENTER - - NIGHT

Lacy sleeps, nothing heard but the sonorous beep of her heart monitor. Ryan sits in a chair watching her.

Rosa returns with a food tray, startled to see Ryan there.

RYAN
Sorry...

ROSA
No, no. She'll be glad to see you.

RYAN
You don't need to wake her.

Rosa nods. Senses a heavy pall over Ryan. Finally:

RYAN (CONT'D)
I'm not as good as Frankie with
this stuff. With people.

ROSA
It's harder for some.

Ryan nods. Stands.

ROSA (CONT'D)
She's strong, thank God. So are
you.
(then)
How much time does she have with
her tiny heart?

RYAN
It's hard to say.

ROSA
Just say it. Please.

RYAN
Not a lot of time.

Rosa takes that in, gaze going to her peacefully slumbering
daughter, before we...

INT. BEDROOM - - FRANKIE'S HOUSE - - CONTINUOUS

Frankie creaks the door open to see Tommy asleep. The
trapezoid of light reveals a platoon of commendations
(scholastics) on walls and trophies (lacrosse) on shelves.

Before Frankie can close the door and leave him be...

TOMMY
(groggy)
...You okay, Mom?

FRANKIE
I'm good, baby. Go back to sleep.

TOMMY
You take your meds?

FRANKIE
Just now.

TOMMY
Not on an empty stomach...

FRANKIE
 (a smile)
 Not on an empty stomach.

She enters. Settles on the edge of the bed. Tommy sits up.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
 Why didn't you tell me about the
 Merit Award you're getting?

TOMMY
 'Cus it's not important.

FRANKIE
 Don't say that.

TOMMY
 I know you're busy. I know you're
 helping people that need it more
 than me.

FRANKIE
 It's okay to need people,
 sweetheart. Doesn't make you needy.

TOMMY
 I know.

She gives him a kiss on the forehead. Goes to the window.
 Opens it slightly.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
 Why'd you do that?

FRANKIE
 In case you want to sneak out or
 something. Break curfew.

TOMMY
 I don't have a curfew.

FRANKIE
 Maybe we should work on that.

Tommy snuffles a laugh. Frankie exits, closing the door and
 plunging us into momentary DARKNESS.

INT. OFFICE - - PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY - - THE NEXT MORNING

STEVE, the pharmaceutical exec we met earlier, enters his
 office for the day to see someone behind his desk.

FRANKIE
 I like this desk. Very nice.

PHARMACEUTICAL EXEC

I'm glad. What the hell are you doing here?

FRANKIE

I think we got off on the wrong foot last time...

PHARMACEUTICAL EXEC

See, I thought we were pretty clear with each other.

FRANKIE

I guess I was the one who lacked clarity in an effort to be affable.

PHARMACEUTICAL EXEC

No offense, but that's not something I'd accuse you of.

FRANKIE

(rises from the desk)
Definitely not after this.

PHARMACEUTICAL EXEC

What're you talking about?

FRANKIE

Remember when you were sleeping with my assistant - what was her name? - Danielle.

(off exec)

Ahhh. You thought I didn't know.

PHARMACEUTICAL EXEC

This is even a new low for you.

FRANKIE

I still keep in touch with her. Christmas cards, that kind of thing. She moved back to Ohio. When she found out you were married, it plagued her. I'm sure she'd love to unburden her soul...

The exec simmers. Deep breaths. Weighing options. Finally:

PHARMACEUTICAL EXEC

Whatever samples I give you, it never comes back to me.

FRANKIE

You *know* I can keep a secret, Stevie.

INT. ICU - - WELLNESS CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

An enervated Lacy lays on an examination table, her lids fluttering like the wings of a hummingbird before we REVERSE ANGLE to see --

Frankie and Ryan stand with Rosa behind the glass, watching as a nurse hangs a new IV medication on the pole. On the bag, we see the details of its contents: 500ml Teragamen.

RYAN

Do I even want to know how you did it?

FRANKIE

No, you do not. Plausible deniability.

(then)

How long until we know if it takes?

RYAN

Within the next 24 hours. If her body's going to reject it, it'll happen soon.

Off the image of these three strong women, feeling utterly helpless, we...

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE***INT. STARBUCKS - - FLASHBACK***

Frankie, with the shorn hair and anemic body, sits in the crowded coffee joint, foot tapping to a tune only she can hear as she carefully surveys the scene.

Then, spotting her target, she's on her feet, hustling over to none other than...Ryan.

FRANKIE

Hi. Do you remember me?

RYAN

*(has to think about it)
Francis.*

FRANKIE

Frankie.

RYAN

*(sees the left side of her
face)
Wow. You look good.*

FRANKIE

Thanks to you.

RYAN

Just doing my job.

FRANKIE

I quit mine today...

RYAN

What?

FRANKIE

*My job. I couldn't do it anymore.
Not after this. Not after what I've
been through.*

RYAN

Congratulations?

FRANKIE

*Too soon to tell. But I think so.
(blurts out)
I wanna do what you do.*

RYAN

It's not for everybody.

FRANKIE
It's for me.

RYAN
How do you know?

FRANKIE
I can just tell.

And off her infectious smile, we're brought back by --

RYAN (V.O.)
Time to get up, sleepyhead.

INT. ROOM - - WELLNESS CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

Back to the present. Frankie wakes from the chair in Lacy's room (the bed now empty save her teddy bear).

FRANKIE
(instantly awake)
How's she doing?

RYAN
No improvement.
(then)
You notice the time?

Frankie squints at her Cartier watch.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Trust me, no matter how much I denied it, all I ever wanted was for my mom to show up.

Frankie rises. Stretches. Grabs the teddy bear off the bed. Looks back at Ryan - who now sits in the chair.

RYAN (CONT'D)
I'll call you if there's any developments.

INT. HALLWAY - - ICU - - WELLNESS CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

Rosa sits on a rickety chair in the corridor, a shadow falling over her that compels her to look up and see --

FRANKIE
She's gonna want this when she wakes up.

She hands Rosa her daughter's weathered teddy bear.

EXT. HARVARD-WESTLAKE - - MAIN GROUNDS - - DAY

Awards ceremony underway, Tommy sits on the stage in a suit and tie, waiting for the Dean at the podium to wrap up. In spite of himself, he looks out at the crowd but...

No sign of his mom.

And he's too practiced in the art of stoicism to let the hurt of that absence show...but we see something in his eyes.

Until those eyes search anew.

And land on Frankie to the left of the stage.

Applause as Tommy rises, buttons his suit jacket, and walks to the podium to accept his spoils...

Frankie beams. Clapping and hollering loudest of all.

EXT. HARVARD-WESTLAKE - - LATER

Mom stands beside son as teachers and fellow students come up and congratulate Tommy. And she sees a different side of Tommy here. Even notices him sneaking shy but interested glances at a cute blonde across the quad.

Frankie's cell chimes. She looks at caller ID ("Ryan").

TOMMY (O.S.)
Take it, Mom. It's cool.

She looks up at Tommy, honorary plaque in hand.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
Seriously. I know I have to share
you with the rest of the world.

She kisses him on the cheek. Before she can head off.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
Mom? Thanks.

She smiles. Answers her cell:

FRANKIE
Talk to me, Goose...

INT. LOBBY - - WELLNESS CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

Frankie hustles through, embarking in the elevator just as a hand slides through. A man stepping aboard. It's --

CHRIS
Don't look so surprised.

The doors close, the elevator ascending...

FRANKIE
Thought you didn't like getting
involved in cases...?

CHRIS
I wanna make sure there's no
confusion on the payment schedule.

Frankie smirks. Then:

FRANKIE
Ryan needs you right now. Even if
she won't say it.

CHRIS
I know.

FRANKIE
Maybe you need her, too.

PING. The doors open, Chris exiting, Frankie following...

INT. ICU UNIT - - WELLNESS CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

Frankie and Chris walk at a steady clip - that turns to an outright sprint when they hear the frenetic sound of a screaming EKG...

...hustling to meet Ryan and Rosa - who stand outside the glass, watching Lacy on the proverbial ropes.

FRANKIE
What's going on?

RYAN
Her body's rejecting the
medication. She won't be able to
take it much longer.

Frankie wraps an arm around Rosa, comforting her as best she can. Chris does the same for Ryan.

And they stand here, no recourse, nothing to do but watch and hope and pray. And then - the EKG settles. Levels out.

Just like that.

And there's a collective sigh of relief as Rosa's tears of anguish are replaced by tears of joy.

She's gonna make it.

INT. ROOM - - WELLNESS CENTER - - LATER

A handful of kids stand around Lacy's bed, asking her questions and laughing.

WIDER to see Rosa admiring her daughter as Frankie enters.

ROSA

Apparently this has made her very popular at school.

(then)

They told me all you did. Procuring the medicine...

FRANKIE

She's lucky to have you.

ROSA

And you.

(then)

I'm sorry we can't pay you...

FRANKIE

There are all different kinds of payment.

She looks at Lacy, giggling with her classmates.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

The makers of Teragamen want to use Lacy as a test case for the drug in children.

ROSA

What does that mean?

FRANKIE

It means she'll have a lifetime supply of it. For free.

Rosa gives Frankie a big hug.

INT. SUV - - MOVING

Chris behind the wheel, Ryan riding shotgun.

RYAN

...are you gonna tell me where we're going?

He hooks a left and we see the SANTA MONICA POLICE STATION. He pulls into a parking spot. Lets the car idle.

CHRIS

We need to make sure this never happens again. We file a police report. We get it on record.

(off Ryan)

I'll be there with you through the whole thing.

RYAN

I'm sorry if I hurt you.

CHRIS

Pals?

RYAN

Pals.

And with that, with abandon, they start to kiss. It might be funny if it weren't so primal. Caught up in the raptures - until Chris pulls away. Catching his breath. Looking at her.

God, she's beautiful...

CHRIS

Let's go.

He exits the car. After a moment, Ryan follows suit.

INT. FRANKIE'S HOME - - EVENING

Frankie bounds in, tossing mail onto a table.

FRANKIE

Tommy...

No answer. She proceeds upstairs...

INT. SECOND FLOOR - - FRANKIE'S HOME - - MOMENTS LATER

Moving down the hall, she opens Tommy's door to find him making out with the cute blonde we saw at the ceremony.

And Frankie's stunned. And elated. Never before has a mother been so excited to see her 16-year-old son alone with a girl.

FRANKIE

Oh my God. I'm like the most embarrassed person in the world right now...

TOMMY

Oh, I think someone's got you beat.

FRANKIE
 Sorry. I'll go. I'll go.
 (but she lingers)
 Okay. I'm going. Carry on...

She exits. We stay behind with Tommy and his friend.

BLONDE GIRL
 Your mom's pretty cool.

TOMMY
 Yeah. Yeah, she is.

INT. ANOTHER DIVE BAR - - CONTINUOUS

Frankie and Ryan indulge. Judging by their body language and slightly slurred speech, they've been at it a while.

FRANKIE
 ...I've never been so proud of him.

RYAN
 You are a very unique woman,
 Francine.

FRANKIE
 I'll drink to that.

RYAN
 You'll drink to anything.

FRANKIE
 I'll drink to that!

And they do. *Liberally.*

RYAN
 You know sometimes I wanna ring
 your neck...but I couldn't do this
 without you.

FRANKIE
 Right back atcha'.

RYAN
 You always say it's a liability not
 having a medical degree...but
 that's your strength. You're not
 beholden to rules. You're the bull
 and the world is your china shop.

FRANKIE

If it were that easy, we could all just take the Hippocratic Oath and be instantly ordained doctors.

RYAN

I never did...

FRANKIE

What?

RYAN

I never took the oath. It's not mandatory, you know.

FRANKIE

That's just wrong.
(staggers off stool)
On your feet, soldier...

EXT. PARKING LOT - - DIVE BAR - - NIGHT

So, alas, they stand underneath flickering street lights, the glow of their phones articulating their faces as they read from the Hippocratic Oath:

RYAN

"I will remember that warmth, sympathy and understanding may outweigh the surgeon's knife..."

FRANKIE

"I will prevent disease whenever I can..."

RYAN

"May I long experience the joy of healing those who seek my help."

They share a warm (perhaps slightly inebriated) smile.

FRANKIE

I always knew we were gonna be friends.

RYAN

How's that?

FRANKIE

I could just tell.

Off these two pals, bound for glory, we...

END PILOT