



UNIVERSAL CABLE PRODUCTIONS

THE ACT

Written By:

Michelle Dean & Nick Antosca

Based on:

“Dee Dee Wanted Her Daughter To Be Sick,
Gypsy Wanted Her Mom To Be Murdered”

By Michelle Dean

Revised Network Draft

2/14/2018

Universal Cable Productions
10 Universal City Plaza
Bldg. 1440, 34th Floor
Universal City, CA 91608

COPYRIGHT © 2017 UNIVERSAL CABLE PRODUCTIONS LLC.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. NOT TO BE DUPLICATED WITHOUT PERMISSION.

This material is the property of Universal Cable Productions LLC and is intended solely for use by its personnel. The sale, copying, reproduction or exploitation of this material in any form is prohibited.

Distribution or disclosure of this material to unauthorized persons is also prohibited.

WRITERS' NOTE

THE ACT is a true-crime anthology series. Each season will tell the story of a crime too bizarre to be believed, except it really happened. Our stories will take place in the overlooked parts of America. Places where people feel trapped and desperate - cheated out of the American dream. And those feelings lead them to commit one-of-a-kind crimes.

That was the case for Gypsy Rose Blanchard. Gypsy is now serving 10 years for the murder of Dee Dee Blanchard, her mother.

Details of their story and supporting elements have been altered or invented to protect the privacy of the families and communities involved, but we have tried to portray Dee Dee and Gypsy's unique relationship as accurately as possible. Even though it ended in murder, they loved and depended on each other.

That murder - that final act - may have defined them in the public eye, but Dee Dee and Gypsy are more than just a bizarre headline. The façade they created for their neighbors and family - that other act - was built on very human fears and yearnings. They wanted a home and they wanted people to like them - just like everyone else.

Our goal is to tell the strange but human stories behind the act.

Cinematic style

The depiction of working-class life in a small community in red state America will be matter-of-fact and realistic, with a slightly heightened subjectivity while we're with Dee Dee and especially Gypsy.

Cinematically, Peter Jackson's *Heavenly Creatures* (another true story about a horrific murder) and, to a slightly lesser degree, the more small-town-centric and grounded elements of the Coen brothers' original *Fargo* might be comparable stylistic examples.

Gypsy's fantasy sequences (the beach, in this episode) should have a surreal and dreamy Lynchian quality. We'll shift settings in future fantasy sequences, with each episode using themes from a different fairy tale.

TEASER

Over black:
JUNE 14, 2015

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (2015)

Inside a quiet, dark house in Springfield, Missouri. Mid-afternoon.

Sounds of a neighborhood in hot summer outside, children playing in the distance, faint Top 40 floating in. Then:

THUMP THUMP THUMP. Someone at the front door.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Dee Dee? Hello??

PAN AROUND to see the living room. At first glance, ordinary: cheap couch, cheap curtains, cheap coffee table.

But some things are off. The walls are BRIGHT PINK. And...

STUFFED ANIMALS perch on every surface. Creepy. Their BEADY, BLANK LITTLE EYES watching for something.

A SILHOUETTE moves to the window. A woman outside.

She KNOCKS on the window, three short raps.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Dee? Gypsy?

A longer pause. Then more urgent and sustained BANGING.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hey!! Dee Dee! You guys ok???

ANGLE ON A DARK HALLWAY ENTRANCE that leads deeper in the house. Off that ominous image we CUT OUTSIDE TO -

EXT. BLANCHARD HOUSE / STREET - DAY (2015)

CLOSE ON THE WIDE, WORRIED EYES of a young woman, beautifully made up. She flinches, ONCE, TWICE, THREE TIMES, as we continue to hear someone banging on glass.

PULL BACK and we see this is LACEY (early 20s, smart, stylish-on-a-budget), a neighbor.

She's clutching her cell phone tight, and she keeps looking at it, nervously, then up at --

Her mom, MEL (40s, rangy) who is at the window of Dee Dee's house, knocking and trying to peer in.

Mel's a tough, no-bullshit single mom. She's alarmed.

MEL

She's got some kind of shit on these windows, I can't see a goddamned thing...

Behind Mel, Lacey YELPS -- and spins to see a neighbor, SHELLEY (60s, a slight limp) has shuffled up behind her.

SHELLEY

Gawd, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to scare you --

Mel turns back and sees Shelley.

MEL

Something's wrong.

Mel grabs Lacey's CELL PHONE out of her daughter's hand, and SHOVES IT in front of Shelley. Lacey's gone sheet-white.

MEL (CONT'D)

Look at this.

Shelley reads. She looks surprised, confused.

SHELLEY

You sure that's, uh...

MEL

That's their Facebook. That's them.

SHELLEY

(slowly)

"That. Bitch. Is. Dead!"

In the background Lacey winces, hard.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)

Maybe it's a joke.

MEL

Dee Dee don't joke like that.

Mel looks at Lacey, who finally shrugs, bewildered.

SHELLEY walks up to the door herself, bangs on it.

SHELLEY

Dee Dee??

No reply. She's still holding Lacey's phone. It buzzes. She looks at it again - and looks closer. Seeing something new.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)

Another one just came up.

Lacey rushes over, grabs the phone.

Mel joins her. They look at the update that just appeared. Whatever it is, it's alarming.

MEL

What the fuck...

ON LACEY. Staring at the Facebook update. Now we see it too:

"I fucken SLASHED THAT FAT PIG AND RAPED HER SWEET INNOCENT DAUGHTER... HER SCREAM WAS SOOOO FUCKEN LOUD LOL."

SHELLEY (O.S.)

Should I... call the cops?

Queasily, Lacey looks up to see Mel walking around the side of the Blanchard house.

LACEY

Mom? What are you doing?

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY / SAME TIME (2015)

Back inside Dee Dee and Gypsy's silent, eerie house.

SKREEK. A window wriggles open. Mel crawls in. Cautious.

MEL

Dee Dee?

She stumbles to the floor.

Mel gets up carefully. On the couch in front of her is a STUFFED BEAR in a yellow raincoat. Lying on its side.

She looks around. Something feels wrong. Off the eerie vibe -

HARD CUT TO:

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - (TV NEWS FOOTAGE 2008)

We're watching 2008 LOCAL NEWS FOOTAGE of the same living room, but it feels different. Cleaner, newer.

OVER PICTURE:

"SEVEN YEARS EARLIER"

Seated, facing camera, our leads: **DEE DEE** (40) and **GYPSY ROSE BLANCHARD** (early teens).

Dee Dee's cheerful and kind. She's let herself go, a bit: gray hair, rumpled clothing. Her whole being is focused on being a good mom, making sure that Gypsy has all she needs.

Gypsy is in a WHEELCHAIR, swaddled in kid's clothes, a baseball cap on her bald head. She looks fragile - you just want to take care of her. Her birdlike voice is an octave higher than natural. Some people might assume she's mentally challenged.

While they may seem odd at first, these two are sympathetic and their sincerity shines through. Dee Dee is generous, open-hearted, and prone to old-fashioned turns of phrase.

DEE DEE

(big smile)

Well! Gypsy and I have always loved fairy tales. But, you know... I really didn't believe in happy endings in the real world. Not until now.

(smiles, reflecting)

It almost feels like we're in a Disney movie.

GYPSY

We love Disney movies.

DEE DEE

Did you see *Enchanted*? The princess in the real world?

Gypsy squeezes her mom's arm.

JOURNALIST (O.S.)

No, I didn't.

DEE DEE

Gawd, I'm sorry, I got off-track. What was the question?

JOURNALIST (O.S.)

How did you feel, when you found out Habitat For Humanity was building this house just for you and Gypsy -

DEE DEE

Oh, right.
(big smile again)

(MORE)

DEE DEE (CONT'D)
Getting this house is just a dream
come true! I mean, I don't like to
dwell on the past, but when we were
homeless, after Katrina... Well, if
it wasn't for her, I don't know
what I would have done. I tell ya,
this girl is stronger than she
looks, and I'm lucky to be her mom.
I was born to be her mom.

JOURNALIST (O.S.)
And are you excited to be here and
make new friends, Gypsy?

DEE DEE
You bet she is.
GYPSY
Oh, yes.

JOURNALIST (O.S.)
(delicately)
It'd be great to hear from Gypsy
how she's feeling...

DEE DEE
Oh, of course!
(embarrassed, to Gypsy)
Are you excited to be here and make
new friends, hon?

Gypsy thinks. Then looks right at the Journalist:

GYPSY
Well... my mom already is my best
friend. And the funny thing is, a
few years ago, she had gave me this
little glass house. And she said,
one day this will be yours.
(a big smile)
And now it finally is!

Off Gypsy's shy, beaming face -

TRANSITION FROM VIDEO FOOTAGE INTO REAL LIFE:

The JOURNALIST is very young, in her early 20s. She nods at
her technician, who starts removing the mics. She stands -

JOURNALIST
That was so great. My producer's
gonna be thrilled.

DEE DEE
Oh, that's good to hear. I get
nervous about these things.

JOURNALIST
 Are you kidding? You guys are
 awesome.

Gypsy and Dee Dee watch patiently as the Journalist and
 Technician finish packing and leave.

When they're gone, Gypsy turns to her mother. Hesitantly:

GYPSY
 Was I good?

Dee Dee gives her an approving smile.

DEE DEE
 You were perfect.

**TITLE OVER PICTURE:
 "THE ACT"**

ACT ONE

EXT. A BEACH - DAY (2008) - FANTASY

FADE IN on TURQUOISE WAVES, WHITE SAND. A few PALM TREES.
 The platonic ideal of a beach.

COME UP ON Gypsy watching the waves. Her head is bare to the
 sun. The look on her face is slightly melancholy. This is
 her daydream, her SAFE PLACE. But a LONELY one.

She looks toward the ocean.

GYPSY'S POV: Standing waist-deep in the OCEAN, A SILHOUETTE.
 Whoever it is - man or woman - raises a hand to wave.

Gypsy tentatively waves back. Wondering, *Who is that?* MATCH
 CUT FROM HER FACE TO -

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (2008)

Gypsy's face again. But now in stark contrast: She's bent
 backwards over the sink, Dee Dee holding a RAZOR, SHAVING
 away the last stubble on Gypsy's head.

DEE DEE
 There we go. Nice to get that all off.

Gypsy opens her eyes. Disappointed at leaving her daydream.

GYPSY

I wonder what it would look like,
my hair. Like if it grew in.

DEE DEE

It'd probably be a rat's nest like
mine.

Gypsy's silence is just the slightest bit defiant. And Dee Dee catches the glimmer of unhappiness in her daughter's eyes.

Dee Dee picks up a mirror, and holds it up so that both she and Gypsy are framed in the reflection.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)

Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who's
the fairest of them all?

GYPSY

(as if on cue)
You are.

DEE DEE

No, you are!

Gypsy goes for a big smile, but it falters. Dee Dee frowns.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)

What's eating ya, hon?

GYPSY

I just hope we get to stay, this
time.

DEE DEE

We will.

GYPSY

That's what you said in Slidell.

DEE DEE

Well... okay, I was wrong that
time. But this is different. You
know why? Because this house
doesn't belong to the government.
They gave it to us. Even put my
name on a piece of paper. You know
what that means?

GYPSY

That it's ours. Yours and mine.

DEE DEE

And they can't take it away. We're going to live here together for the rest of our lives.

Gypsy smiles, a little bit wider this time.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)

And we're gonna make friends this time. Okay? I promise.

(brightly)

Anyway, there's no hurricanes in Missouri.

Gypsy opens her mouth, but -- the DOORBELL rings. Mother and daughter both look up -- they weren't expecting anyone.

CUT TO:

EXT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - DUSK (2015)

CLOSE ON the FRONT DOOR, seen from the outside. The light is different, and that's our sign that **we're back to June 2015**.

PULL BACK to see a couple uniformed cops now standing sentry outside. **OTHER NEIGHBORS** have gathered.

ON LACEY, still pale. A **COP CAR** at the curb behind her. Lacey is watching Mel get questioned by two **DETECTIVES**, **FLORES** (40s, no-nonsense) and **BUTLER** (30s, laconic). Lacey overhears bits:

FLORES

You see anything in there?

MEL

No, they made me come out before I finished lookin.' Now you're here, why don't you go in--

BUTLER

We need a warrant to do that.

MEL

How long will that take?

Lacey furtively checks her phone. Scared/thinking.

ANGLE ON FLORES: She has noticed Lacey.

Flores senses something off with this kid. Lacey's standing alone, clearly on edge. Staring at the front door of the Blanchard house...

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - DAY (2008)

Dee Dee swinging the same front door open in 2008. We only see Dee Dee's side of the conversation, we don't see who's at the door.

DEE DEE
(big smile)
Well, hi there. Are you our new neighbor?

LACEY (O.S.)
One of them, yeah! I'm Lacey, from that house over there.

ANGLE ON KITCHEN DOORWAY: Gypsy, fresh from having head shaved, baseball cap on, peers around a doorframe. She can't quite get a look at the neighbor. But what she hears intrigues her. She rolls tentatively closer.

DEE DEE
(waving)
Come in, come in.

Dee Dee steps back to let Lacey in. As Lacey enters we go into --

GYPSY'S POV: Slightly stylized. Bathed in sunlight, Lacey looks more confident, cool, and beautiful than any 16-year-old could be possibly be. *This* is the kind of glamorous friend Gypsy wants.

Or wants to be.

LACEY
Well you must be Gypsy.

GYPSY
Hi!!!

LACEY
Nice hat.

Gypsy beams at the compliment.

GYPSY
It is so good to meet you.

The formality is sweet, endearing.

LACEY

Oh, you're a charmer, huh?

(to Dee Dee)

I did see y'all on the tv news,
actually. That's sort of why I
like, came over --

An alarm goes off on Dee Dee's cheap digital watch. She hits the button in a practiced gesture, then waves for Lacey to continue.

LACEY (CONT'D)

-- I volunteer at the hospital? I
kinda wanna be a nurse one day.
Anyway, I sometimes do the kids'
makeup there, you know, like as a
treat? Like a makeover night. And I
thought maybe Gypsy might let me...
practice on her a bit?

DEE DEE

Oh, well, um, uhh --

Gypsy looks pleadingly at her mother. Dee Dee, chewing her lip, looks back and forth between the two girls.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)

(magnanimously)

Well, I do have a couple boxes left
to unpack.

Lacey grins. Gypsy grins, thrilled.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)

But take it easy, okay?

CUT TO:

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY (2008)

A CLOSED EYELID. A makeup brush comes into frame to brush
LIGHT BLUE EYESHADOW on.

Pull back to Gypsy's blissed-out face as Lacey touches her
up.

LACEY

You are being so. Good. You're
sitting so. Still.

Lacey talks to Gypsy as you would to a very small child.

GYPSY

My mom lets me wear makeup
sometimes when we go to
conventions.

LACEY

(surprised)
Conventions?

GYPSY

You know, like where you dress up?
I have Mandalorian armor!

Lacey looks blank.

Gypsy notices Lacey's NECKLACE. Feathers, a brass leaf.
Cheap, but a grown-up style.

GYPSY (CONT'D)

That's so pretty!

LACEY

Thanks. My boyfriend gave it to me.

GYPSY

You have a boyfriend?

LACEY

I do.

GYPSY

Are you in love?

LACEY

Well... He's a dumbass, but I'll
probably like, marry him or
something one day.

Gypsy wants to gossip further, but she's too inexperienced
to know what to say next.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Open your eyes wide, and look up?
(applying mascara)
So these convention thingies, what
do you dress up as again? A
Malaysian?

GYPSY

(laughs)
Actually, I'm mostly a Disney
person... I like to go as a
princess, like Cinderella.

(MORE)

GYPSY (CONT'D)
My favorite though is Ariel from
Little Mermaid.

LACEY
Oh. 'Cause Ariel gets her legs...

Lacey hesitates, self-conscious: Was that insensitive? But
Gypsy takes no offense. Eyes closed:

GYPSY
When I was little, I could walk.

LACEY
You... could?

GYPSY
That's what my mom says. She said
my dad used to make fun of the way
I walked. He didn't like having a
kid who was a cripple. He hates us.

Lacey selects a lipstick. Purses her lips to show Gypsy how.
And this time when she speaks her voice is different. More
like she is speaking to a fellow adult.

LACEY
(applying lipstick)
I have a bad dad too.

Lacey hands Gypsy a tissue. Gypsy just looks at it.

LACEY (CONT'D)
For blotting. Like this.

She demonstrates. Gypsy does it. Lacey takes the tissue and
puts them side by side, two LIP IMPRINTS. They match, and a
SPARK of something appears in Gypsy's eyes.

Lacey hands Gypsy a mirror, and Gypsy holds it up and looks
at herself for a beat. She looks so normal. Like a teenager
should.

GYPSY
Lacey?

LACEY
Yeah?

GYPSY
Can we be friends?

Lacey smiles at Gypsy, who smiles hopefully back.

LACEY

Of course! I think it was like,
fate that you moved here.

Gypsy blushes. Then Lacey's CELL rings. She frowns, answers.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Hey, momma...

Lacey waves to Gypsy and mouths, "gotta go."

As Lacey starts to gather her things up, we linger on Gypsy staring at her, wide-eyed, enamored...

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY (2015)

A grim look on Lacey's face in 2015 as she trudges away from the Blanchard house towards her own home. Typing rapidly on her phone.

FLORES (O.S.)

Hey. Hey. Excuse me, miss...

We see that Lacey registers the detective calling after her. But she doesn't stop moving.

FLORES (O.S.) (CONT'D)

HEY!

A HAND GRABS Lacey's shoulder. Lacey flinches. Stops.

FLORES (CONT'D)

I need to ask you some questions.

LACEY

Do I have to answer them?

FLORES

You're friends with the daughter,
right?

(checks notebook)

Gypsy.

LACEY

I dunno. I guess.

FLORES

You're in school together?

LACEY

She doesn't go to school.

FLORES

But your mom says you're close.
Said you used to be over there all
the time.

Lacey just stares, bites her lip.

FLORES (CONT'D)

Is there something wrong?

LACEY

(too casual)
No. Not with me.

FLORES

(pointing to porch steps)
Mind if I sit?

Flores sits without waiting for an answer.

FLORES (CONT'D)

Tell me a little more about Gypsy
and Dee Dee. What goes on over
there?

Not a question. Lacey reluctantly sits too, but on the other
side of the steps, as far away from Flores as possible.

ANGLE ON the Blanchard House across the street. SLOW ZOOM
toward the WINDOW, blocked by a faded curtain -

CUT TO:

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (2008)

COME UP on Gypsy back in the living room, shot from behind,
silhouetted in the light from the window (same curtains, but
brand new) she's peering out of.

Dee Dee walks in, drying her hands on a dish towel.

DEE DEE

Did she leave already?

GYPSY

Her mom called her.

Dee Dee joins her at the window.

DEE DEE

You know what? Maybe I should take
a cake or something over. Start off
on the right foot.

GYPSY

That's a good idea, Lacey said --

DEE DEE

(smugly)

Didn't I say this would happen?

Didn't I say we'd make friends?

GYPSY

Yes --

DEE DEE

I worry about making friends too. People we can call when we need to go to the airport, or people we can borrow twenty bucks from when things are tight. We might not have family. But there's good people everywhere. We just have to find them.

Dee Dee turns to look at her daughter for the first time. And Gypsy's heavily made up face blinks back at her.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)

You need to wash that stuff off your face.

GYPSY

But --

Dee Dee raises a finger to shush.

DEE DEE

You're really too young for all that paint, pretty girl. It's too grown up for you.

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - BATHROOM - EVENING

Dee Dee leans against the counter, arms crossed as Gypsy rubs a washcloth over her face.

DEE DEE

Scrub.

GYPSY

(looking at the washcloth miserably)

Girls. Wear. Makeup. Mom.

DEE DEE

You're not like other girls.

Dee Dee clearly means this to be a compliment, but Gypsy wants to be like other girls. We see this on her face.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)

Oh, honey. I know you want to be like everybody else sometimes. But you know what... I like you special.

Gypsy nods reluctantly. She's heard this before.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)

Hey. Remember Snow White?

GYPSY

(muttering)

She got to wear makeup.

DEE DEE

I'm just trying to keep you from biting a poison apple.

GYPSY

I know.

Dee Dee performs an inspection of Gypsy's now-bare lips.

DEE DEE

That's my girl. Now put a smile on that clean face. Hey! How about this weekend I take you shopping? Would you like that?

Gypsy musters a smile.

EXT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY (2008)

The next morning. Dee Dee, trying to guide Gypsy's wheelchair through the front door. It keeps jamming, and Dee Dee has to bend down and pull hard to get it over the lip.

DEE DEE

(to herself)

Gotta get that fixed.

But when Dee Dee stands we get a clear look across the street and there is a TON going on over there:

EXT. MEL'S HOUSE - FRONT LAWN - DAY (2008)

A couple young boys running around. A beat-up Honda parked in the driveway. And as Dee Dee watches, Lacey emerges around the side of it, scrubbing with a soaped-up sponge.

Then: LUKE (16, dirtbag-handsome) appears around the other side. He's helping Lacey wash the car.

Mel and Shelley sit in rickety chairs facing the car. Younger than we saw them in the teaser. Clearly buddies. Shelley's laughing, a good sidekick. Mel dominates her in every sense.

MEL
Now don't miss the rims!

DEE DEE (O.S.)
Oh! Oh, hello!

Mel and Shelley look up, and we follow their gaze:

To Dee Dee, hurrying across the street. Gypsy follows, zooming along in her wheelchair. In colorful clothing, they're quite the sight.

Mel and Shelley stand up to greet them.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)
You *must* be Lacey's mother.

MEL
Oh yeah, she might be mine --

DEE DEE
She's just wonderful --

MEL
Well, there's days I'd say she don't belong to me, you just ain't caught me on one of 'em.

Mel laughs at her own joke. Not quite getting it, Dee Dee just smiles.

DEE DEE
Well you do look awful young to be her mother!

MEL
(playful)
That's a lie if I ever heard one.

DEE DEE
(thrown)
No, no, I mean it!

An awkward pause.

SHELLEY

I'm Shelley. Don't be scared of Mel. She seems like she bites but she don't.

MEL

(wickedly)

Well - there was that one time...

Dee Dee laughs uneasily again. The rhythm of these jokes is just beyond her, she's too nervous to join in.

CUT TO:

ON GYPSY

She watches Lacey and Luke laugh and flirt as they wash the car, deep in puppy love. She's enthralled.

Lacey grins at Gypsy, shielding her eyes from the sunlight.

GYPSY

(blushing)

My mom made me take off the makeup you did.

LACEY

I used to try to sneak out with purple eyeshadow on *all* the time, but my mom always caught me.

Gypsy grins. Connection. Then she gestures at the sponge.

GYPSY

Can I... Can I help?

LACEY

Sure!

She hands Gypsy the sponge. Gypsy wrings it out on the pavement, doing a comically thorough job.

LACEY (CONT'D)

You could give Luke a few tips!

LUKE

(playing along)

Sure could.

Gypsy is happy as a clam. Lacey winks at Luke, who rolls his eyes.

Lacey's necklace glints in the sunlight. Gypsy stares at it, as though studying it, trying to memorize it. Off her longing --

DEE DEE

Mel, and Shelley in mid-conversation.

MEL

Sub-Man-Dig-Old-Yeller-what? Say that again?

DEE DEE

Oh, I know, right? That's such a tough one!

(carefully:)

Sub-man-dib-ular gland surgery. That's when they took out her salivary glands, 'cause she was choking at night. Then she also has the asthma, quadriplegia, epilepsy, the heart murmur, muscular dystrophy, hearing loss, she's got a lazy eye sometimes, her teeth...

(beat)

Oh, and she's anemic.

The women stare.

SHELLEY

Wow. When my kids got a cold at the same time, I was always like: "Lord, take them. Please. Find them a good family." How do you do it?

DEE DEE

(blushing)

I sleep with one eye open, I guess.

On Mel, watching Luke reach over to squeeze Lacey's butt.

MEL

Yeah, me too. Can't watch 'em forever, though.

Dee Dee just looks at Mel, not sure how to respond.

SHELLEY

Mel is a great mom. Everybody asks her advice. I keep sayin' she should change her name to White Oprah.

Dee Dee smiles, suddenly sensing an opening.

DEE DEE

Well I *have* always wanted to be friends with Oprah!

MEL

(waving it off)

I'm not as nice as Oprah. I just don't believe in spoiling kids. You gotta teach them to fend for themselves as soon as they can walk.

Dee Dee blinks. Her kid can't walk.

MEL (CONT'D)

(shading her eyes)

Keep scrubbing. I ain't letting you drive that car for free!

Lacey waves her hand dismissively at her mother.

Dee Dee's mind is still on Mel's earlier remark about self-reliance.

DEE DEE

It's different with Gypsy --

MEL

'Course. If she ain't well --

DEE DEE

-- she *can't* fend for herself. I *have* to do everything for her.

A beat.

SHELLEY

That must be a burden to carry.

DEE DEE

It is. But I believe I was born to be that girl's mother, that God has a plan for everything, and that was his for me.

MEL

Well, I dunno about God, but I think she's lucky to have you, Dee Dee. Listen, anything we can do, just ask. We try to help each other out here, the honest folks do, on this block. Ain't got nothing but ourselves to depend on. Okay?

But Dee Dee's staring in another direction.

The other two turn to follow her gaze:

Lacey drinks greedily from a coke can.

But Dee Dee is looking at Gypsy:

CLOSE ON GYPSY

Holding her own opened Coke like it's the eighth wonder of the world. But before she can sip...

Dee Dee's hand sweeps in and briskly plucks it away.

DEE DEE
She can't have that.

Gypsy doesn't visibly react.

Luke and Lacey stare at Dee Dee. Mel follows Dee Dee over, her own mother hen instinct activated.

MEL
She can't have... a coke?

DEE DEE
Sugar. She's allergic. A sip, maybe. But if she drank a whole coke?

Dee Dee pulls out an EPI PEN from the wheelchair.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)
That's why we keep an Epi Pen in her chair. She goes into shock.

MEL
Oh, shit.

LACEY
I'm so sorry, Mrs. Blanchard, I didn't know... like I told you, I want to be a nurse. I would never...

Dee Dee smiles, waves it off.

DEE DEE
You couldn't have known.
(matter-of-fact)
We've been to the ER four times this year already.
(MORE)

DEE DEE (CONT'D)
 And as *fun* as that is... no need to
 make it five before Easter.

Dee Dee squeezes Gypsy's shoulder protectively.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)
 Especially not when we have big
 plans today!

Gypsy's now wearing a compliant smile. But her eyes are a
 little blank. Like she's shut something off.

CUT TO:

EXT. TARGET - MORNING (2008)

Establishing. The Target store gleams like a shopper's
 Mecca. A BEAUTIFUL SCORE kicks up.

INT. TARGET - MORNING (2008)

A **MONTAGE** which begins with Gypsy admiring a satin skirt in
 the Kids section.

Dee Dee SWEEPS in like a fairy godmother, a big smile on her
 face. She whisks the SKIRT off the rack and holds it up to
 Gypsy and NODS. Gypsy's face breaks into a HUGE SMILE.

We watch Gypsy's happiness build as the pair:

- Pick out BEDSHEETS (pink, of course) in Home...
- check out the FISH TANKS in the Pets section...
- survey the DOLLS in Toys.

They reach the DVD aisle. By now, Gypsy is giddy, wheeling
 around, doing figure eights. And then, she spots something:

A *LITTLE MERMAID II* DVD. She brings it to Dee Dee.

Dee Dee examines it, pretends to read the back, like any
 parent would before approving a purchase. Her eye falls on
 the price tag: \$24.99. A little steep.

She looks at Gypsy. A beat. Dee Dee glances around and
 furtively gestures to Gypsy: *Lean forward*.

Dee Dee slips the DVD into the back of the wheelchair.

Gypsy leans back again, and it's concealed. They move on,
 totally casual. *They're shoplifters*.

At the end of the aisle Dee Dee and Gypsy have a choice:
 left into electronics, right into jewelry.

GYPSY
Mom?

DEE DEE
No.

GYPSY
(hurt, a bit indignant)
... No?

DEE DEE
You're not getting a laptop. You
can use mine. With me there.

GYPSY
No, I -

DEE DEE
The internet is not for kids, Gypsy.
(bites lip)
You don't know what men are like.
And you've had just as much
independence as I can handle for
one week!

GYPSY
Mom. Not a laptop.

She rolls herself off toward the JEWELRY COUNTER. Dee Dee
follows, puzzled but willing.

JEWELRY COUNTER

Gypsy browses, looking past the kid jewelry to a long, boho-
type pendant. LACEY'S NECKLACE. Gypsy points at it.

DEE DEE
(doubtful)
That one?

It's a teenager's necklace. In other words: For someone way
older than Gypsy. Gypsy nods.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)
Really?

GYPSY
Please?

Dee Dee hesitates. But sees how badly Gypsy wants it.

And she nods, smiling. Which makes Gypsy beam with delight.

Mother and daughter are in sync, in a conspiracy to get that

necklace. They look around for security.

The coast is clear.

Gypsy rolls up to a CLERK, who smiles at her and begins to answer her questions.

While the Clerk is distracted, Dee Dee sidles up to the NECKLACE. While she pretends to look at something else, she takes the necklace off the rack, hides it in her hand...

And SLIPS IT INTO HER POCKET. Easy.

Dee Dee smiles.

Then Dee Dee LOOKS UP. Her smile FREEZES.

Someone is watching. And of all people...

It's MEL.

Thirty feet away. Doing some shopping of her own.

Mel stares at Dee. A few different feelings flit across her face: Surprise, confusion. Judgment.

But then Mel's face goes blank, and she walks off.

Behind Dee Dee a LOUD CLATTERING SOUND rises. Getting louder and louder, like a train coming towards her. Dee Dee SQUEEZES her eyes shut, trying to block it out.

But when she opens them, it's just something totally ordinary: an employee pushing a bunch of carts.

Dee Dee takes in a deep breath. Feeling sick.

ACT TWO

EXT. TARGET - PARKING LOT - DAY (2008)

Dee Dee is tense as she wheels Gypsy toward their car.

The lot is full of POTHOLES, and the wheelchair GETS STUCK IN ONE, rattling and jolting - which worsens Dee Dee's stress level as she wrestles it out.

GYPSY

Mom, what's wrong?

DEE DEE

Just want to get home, that's all.

They reach the car. Dee Dee begins the cumbersome process of getting Gypsy and the wheelchair in.

GYPSY
Don't you think it's so pretty, Mom?

DEE DEE
Gypsy, will you just --

SECURITY GUARD
Ma'am? EXCUSE ME - Ma'am?

A SECURITY GUARD is urgently walking after them.

Dee Dee keeps smiling as the Guard huffs and puffs up. Gypsy is scared too, fully aware of the danger.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
(still wheezing)
I SAW you...

Dee Dee prepares some kind of denial/excuse/plea. But -

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
I SAW you on TV!

Dee Dee can't believe it. He's not busting them. She smiles -

DEE DEE
You sure did.

SECURITY GUARD
I thought so!
(to Gypsy)
You taking good care of your mom?

GYPSY
(cheerfully)
I always do.

Off Dee Dee's relieved smile...

INT. DEE DEE'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY (2008)

Dee Dee driving, white-knuckled on the steering wheel. Gypsy is playing with her new necklace.

The car is drifting all over the road. She's not going very fast, but she's distracted. Dangerously so.

A big PICKUP TRUCK swerves around her, cutting close.

The truck driver HONNNNNNNNKS.

TRUCK DRIVER
Watch it, y'old bitch!

Dee Dee hits the brakes, and guides the car to the gravel shoulder. She puts it in park. Then she COLLAPSES on the steering wheel. SOBBING LOUDLY.

Gypsy pats her mom's shoulder. Like she's the parent.

GYPSY
Mom? Mommy? Mom?

Dee Dee wipes her nose on her sleeve.

DEE DEE
You just don't know, do you...

GYPSY
Don't know what?

DEE DEE
What I do for you. The risks I take.

GYPSY
I do --

DEE DEE
(turning on Gypsy)
You know I'd do anything for you.
But we could get into real trouble
if people found us out, Gypsy. Real
trouble.

GYPSY
(stammering)
I know, Mom. I know.

Gypsy suddenly smiles big, determined to cheer her mom up.

GYPSY (CONT'D)
(chirpy, but nervous)
I'm just SO HAPPY here already.
Thank you for bringing us here.

Dee Dee pulls out a kleenex, wipes her eyes and nose.
Consults the mirror.

GYPSY (CONT'D)
You know, mom, I love this
necklace.
(beat)
It's BEAUTIFUL. It's a necklace for
a lady. Like, a grown-up lady.
(MORE)

GYPSY (CONT'D)

(beat)

Lacey has one just like it.

DEE DEE

Oh.

(beat)

So that's why you wanted it.

Gypsy doesn't catch the hostility there and smiles. Off Dee Dee's slightly troubled look...

CUT TO:

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING (2008)

Gypsy parked in front of the tv, watching *Return of the Jedi*. She's still wearing the necklace, touching it constantly.

Dee Dee watches from the doorway. Irritated. After a beat, she disappears into the kitchen.

Then -- **Dee Dee bustles back**, garbage bag in hand. She busies herself picking up stuffed animals and tossing them in the bag. She does it until Gypsy looks up from the movie.

GYPSY

Mom? What are you doing?

DEE DEE

Oh, just cleaning up. We have way too much *junk*.

She picks up a small lion and tosses it into the bag. A little too nonchalant. She's clearly performing.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)

I think we need to take some of it to the Goodwill. Or to the church.

Gypsy watches as Dee Dee picks up a bear wearing a raincoat.

GYPSY

Not Mr. Puddles!

DEE DEE

(reproachful)

Don't you want to help children who are less fortunate than you? We have so much. I just thought we should give back.

(an edge to her voice)

You're getting a little old for Mr. Puddles, anyway.

Gypsy looks down at her pendant. Dee Dee again raises the garbage bag, poisoning Mr. Puddles over it.

GYPSY
(miserably)
Wait.

DEE DEE
Wait, what?

GYPSY
I'm not too old for Mr. Puddles. I
want to keep him!

Dee Dee pretends to be impassive.

GYPSY (CONT'D)
Remember you got him for me when I
had my operation for my drooling?
(beat)
Please? Mom. Please???

DEE DEE
(relenting)
Okay, Mr. Puddles can stay.

She replaces the bear on his perch. Her watch alarm goes off again, and Dee Dee quickly hits the button.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)
But it's time for your medications,
young lady, then off to bed.

Gypsy nods. Dee Dee leaves the room. And then Gypsy, alone, thinks for a moment.

Slowly, she pulls the pendant off, over her head. And stows it in her wheelchair, for safekeeping.

EXT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - DAY (2008)

Another day. Sunny. But Dee Dee is still anxious.

She carries a water can to her little garden and starts fussing over the plants, glancing across the street every once in awhile.

Gypsy sits on the porch sluggishly. No necklace.

GYPSY
I want to go inside. I'm tired.

DEE DEE
In a minute.

Gypsy looks across the street, and brightens.

We hear a car door SLAM, offscreen, and Dee Dee turns around, to see --

MEL, ACROSS THE STREET

a couple sixpacks in hand, trudging to her front porch.

Shelley emerges from the car too, with GROCERY BAGS. Lacey is on the porch to help take the bags inside.

GYPSY (O.S.)

Hi Lacey!

LACEY

(waving back)

Hey!

Behind her, Mel frowns.

Dee Dee watches, thinking. She knows she needs to mend things with Mel, but how? An idea comes to her.

DEE DEE

Go on inside. I'll be just a minute.

GYPSY

I want to go with you --

DEE DEE

Nuh uh. I'll be right back.

Dee Dee gathers herself. She gets up, dusts her knees off, and starts toward Mel.

Gypsy watches. Then gets a gleam in her eye: With her mom gone, she has the house to herself. She quickly wheels herself back inside...

EXT. MEL'S HOUSE - DAY (2008)

Mel and Shelley have cracked open beers on the porch.

MEL

... but he was about as drunk as a skunk and sicker than...

Mel trails off, glancing up to see Dee Dee coming over. Shelley waves. Dee Dee's trying to be casual, sunny.

DEE DEE

Hey y'all!

SHELLEY

Hey!

Mel is silent. Dee Dee plunges in anyway.

DEE DEE

Y'know, Gypsy's *real happy* we ended up in a place with such good neighbors.

SHELLEY

Aww. House treatin' you good?

DEE DEE

Like it was made just for us.

SHELLEY

(confused)

Wasn't it?

MEL

That's the joke, Shelley.

SHELLEY

(relieved, laughs)

Oh, right!

DEE DEE

Hey Mel, I got a question. You take real cream in your coffee?

MEL

(beat)

Not usually, Dee Dee. How come?

DEE DEE

Gypsy and I were gonna whip up something tonight, and I realized, well, crap. No cream. You got any cream I could borrow?

Mel stares at Dee Dee. Feeling like she's fake.

MEL

No. No, sorry. I'm watching my figure, skim only in this house.

SHELLEY

(chummy, oblivious)

Me too, blech, can't even go near cream no more.

MEL

You might have to... you know, go to Target. Pick some up.

Dee Dee's smile freezes. Is Mel pointedly referencing the shoplifting? Or was that a casual remark?

Mel turns to Shelley, almost like Dee Dee's not there -

MEL (CONT'D)

Anyways, like I was saying. I feel bad for Lucy. I saw his eyes, the man was drunk. Liars don't change..

SHELLEY

(glancing at Dee Dee)
Maybe we shouldn't talk about it now. She don't know them.

Mel looks directly at Dee Dee.

MEL

Well, Shelley, I think Dee Dee might as well get used to one thing about living in this neighborhood: Sooner or later everybody knows everything about everyone.

To break the tension, Mel laughs, and so does Shelley. Even Dee Dee joins in.

But Mel's words are scarier to Dee Dee than Mel knows.

MEL (CONT'D)

(standing)
Anyway. We'd best be getting ready for Asshole.

Shelley laughs at Dee Dee's shocked look.

SHELLEY

It's a card game, Dee Dee.

DEE DEE

Oh. Oh, I just don't like those swear words, you know.

MEL

(studied nonchalance)
Oh, well. Sorry if we offend your principles.

They go inside. Dee Dee turns around to look back at her house, and we get a look at her eyes, brimming with tears of hurt and anger, before we --

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - NIGHT (2015)

Butler and Flores talk on the lawn. Flores holds the WARRANT that Butler just handed her.

BUTLER
The judge just signed it.

He glances toward Lacey, who's still anxiously sitting on the porch across the street, watching them

BUTLER (CONT'D)
What's with her?

FLORES
Not sure yet. Keep her warm for me,
ok?

Butler nods and walks away toward Lacey.

Flores turns to **COP #1**.

FLORES (CONT'D)
Come with me.

She goes toward the Blanchard house...

CUT TO:

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (2015)

The dark, musty living room in 2015.

Flores climbs carefully in the window. Cop #1 follows her.

COP #1
Shit, it's *freezing* in here.

FLORES
The air conditioning's on.

They look around in the darkness.

THEIR POV: Dozens of stuffed animals. Staring back at them.

COP #1
What the fuck?

Flores senses something's wrong here. She looks through the kitchen door. Nothing there. She goes into the

HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

She walks down the hall toward the bathroom. The walls are lined with pictures, all mounted in bizarre collages covered with glitter and feathers:

- a baby Gypsy, a tiny thing with blonde hair, on her mother's lap;
- a toddler Gypsy in a ballet outfit, lying on her side on the floor of a dance studio;
- Dee Dee, young and pretty, in a homecoming queen's tiara.

Flores considers each of these. But she keeps moving, soon reaching the door of the --

BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Flores looks around. Everything seems normal, if messy. Except for the stuffed toys piled in here too, on the bathroom counter.

HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Flores steps back into the hall, where Cop #1 is waiting.

FLORES
Don't touch anything.

She goes further down the hall.

Behind her, Cop #1 peers in the bathroom.

Flores approaches the bedroom. She sees the bedroom mirror through the door... a hint of RUMPLED PINK SHEETS.

Flores pushes the door open, enters -

THE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cluttered and dirty. The bed is heaped with PINK SHEETS, pillows, blankets, old clothes.

There's medical equipment all around - an old CPAP machine on the floor, empty RX bottles.

Cop #1 appears in the doorway behind Flores.

Flores looks back to the messy bed, the heaps of clothes.

She puts on PLASTIC GLOVES, to pull the sheets aside. First revealing only more sheets, old clothes. And then...

A layer of BLOOD-SOAKED SHEETS. Flores pulls them aside. Revealing -

DEE DEE'S HEAD on the pillow, lifeless. Flores pulls back a little more, and we see Dee Dee's shoulder, with a big, deep PUNCTURE WOUND in it.

FLORES

Ah, shit.

She steps back and almost FALLS, tripping over something that crashes behind her. We follow Flores's gaze as she turns around and sees --

GYPSY'S EMPTY WHEELCHAIR, tipped on its side.

ACT THREE

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (2008)

CLOSE ON A TV SCREEN - Where *THE LITTLE MERMAID* plays.

MERMAID ON TV

"What would I give... to live where you are..."

PULL BACK SLOWLY to reveal Gypsy in her wheelchair, in front of the tv. But she's not watching the movie.

We FOLLOW HER GAZE out the PICTURE WINDOW behind her, we can see SILHOUETTES, across the street. Dee Dee, Mel, and Shelley. Acting out THE SCENE WE SAW BEFORE. We're now seeing what Gypsy was up to in the meantime.

Gypsy reaches cautiously for DEE DEE'S LAPTOP. The one she's forbidden to use. She flips it open and enters a PASSWORD, unlocking the computer.

Glances around nervously, then hesitates, and TYPES more. Scratching an itch she doesn't even really understand.

CUT TO the screen, where we see Gypsy has Googled **"best friend."**

She flips through image results. Photos of happy teens. One young couple who could be Lacey and Luke.

Types: **"boyfriend."** Then impulsively adds "kiss" to the search string.

New results come up: "**Is Your Boyfriend A Good Kisser?**" And generic IMAGES of young people kissing. People on beaches. Wedding kisses.

Gypsy studies these. She wants to join these people, but isn't sure how to do it.

So she closes her eyes and goes back to her SAFE PLACE --

EXT. A BEACH - DAY (FANTASY)

Gypsy sits on the same beautiful beach as before. SUNSET.

Gypsy's head is still shaved. But this time, she's wearing a dress, a high-necked, virgin-white number. And she has LACEY'S NECKLACE on, too.

She SMILES at whoever's beside her. We don't see who yet.

PULL BACK SLOWLY FROM BEHIND... to reveal that there is A MAN sitting beside her in silhouette.

This man is clearly well-built - broad shoulders, strong. Gypsy reaches over to touch his arm -

And we REVEAL -

He's ANIMATED. Like a Disney Prince Charming, surreal, but also vague and shimmering, an idea of a man still forming. He's a *fantasy boyfriend*.

He leans over, and he brings his mouth to Gypsy's neck as if to kiss her, but -

DEE DEE (O.S.)
(upset)
Gypsy!

And we snap back to -

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (2008)

- reality. Gypsy swiftly deletes her search history, and tosses the computer back where it was, just as -

Dee Dee enters, keyed up and frustrated.

For the first time, we see that Gypsy knows just what to do to manage Dee Dee when she's upset. DISTRACTION.

GYPSY
Can we get pizza?
(beat)
Please. A treat??

Dee Dee hesitates, weighing the expense.

DEE DEE
I think... I think we can swing it.
I've got a coupon.

GYPSY
(clapping childishly)
Yay!!

Dee Dee smiles tightly. CUT TO:

INT. DOMINO'S PIZZA - DUSK (2008)

Dee Dee waits at the counter. Tense and preoccupied.

A few people are sitting in chairs, one snoring ever so slightly. ZACK (20-ish, bored) mans the register.

DEE DEE
Is it gonna be too much longer, you
think? My daughter's in the car.

Zack shrugs. Opens the register. Then notices something.

ZACK
Oh, um...

He takes a WRINKLED COUPON from the register, examines it - as a STONED GUY lumbers out of the back and tosses a FRESH PIZZA in its box on the counter.

STONED GUY
Cheese.

As Dee Dee reaches for the pizza, Zack puts a hand on it. In his other hand, he has the WRINKLED COUPON.

ZACK
Actually, this coupon you gave me
looks like it's expired, so.

DEE DEE
I just got it the other day.

ZACK
But it's expired though.

DEE DEE
That's not my coupon then.

ZACK
It was right on top.

Dee Dee digs in her purse for a few CRUMPLED ONES.

DEE DEE
How much more?

ZACK
(tapping on calculator)
Uh. \$3.91.

Dee Dee has THREE ONE-DOLLAR BILLS. She gives them to him.

ZACK (CONT'D)
And ninety-one cents.

DEE DEE
I don't have ninety-one cents. I'll
owe you. I will come back and give
you a whole dollar.

ZACK
Nah, can't be doing that.

Dee Dee stares at him. Then grabs for the pizza - but Zack
slams his hand down on it at the same time. They silently
face off. Then slowly, clenched teeth:

DEE DEE
My daughter is waiting. She's...
out there because it takes too long
to get her *wheelchair* out of the
car. Why are you being like this?

ZACK
I'm not being like this. You're
being like this.

Dee Dee yanks at the pizza box. Zack yanks it back.

Dee Dee loses it, PULLING at the pizza box while Zack PULLS
back in an absurd tug-of-war as other patrons turn to stare--

DEE DEE
I am taking my daughter her pizza!

ZACK
You have to pay for this pizza!

DEE DEE
GIVE ME THE PIZZA!

ZACK (CONT'D)
LET GO YOU CRAZY BITCH!

The PIZZA BOX RIPS OPEN, the PIZZA itself flopping on the
counter.

Dee Dee and Zack stare at it, breathing heavily.

Then Dee Dee snatches up several pieces, tosses them back in the mangled box -

DEE DEE
I paid for most of a pizza - and
I'm taking most of a pizza!

CUT TO:

INT. DEE DEE'S CAR (PARKED / MOVING) - NIGHT (2008)

Gypsy watches expressionless as Dee Dee slams out of Domino's, pizza in hand, and stomps toward the car.

Dee Dee gets in the car and grimly hands Gypsy a slice. She STARTS the car. Gypsy starts to take a bite.

DEE DEE
Don't eat all that now. Your
stomach can't handle it.

CUT TO:

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT (2008)

CLOSE ON A BLENDER... as a SLICE OF PIZZA is jammed into it.

Then ENSURE is poured in too, all over the pizza.

Dee Dee, still tense from earlier, STARTS THE BLENDER with a ROAR, turning it all into a HORRIBLE PALE-REDDISH SLUDGE.

Then she sucks up a bunch of the nightmare smoothie into that HUGE TURKEY BASTER-LIKE SYRINGE.

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (2008)

Gypsy sits gazing out the window.

Dee Dee appears behind her, holding the syringe full of pizza-Ensure smoothie.

Now, Gypsy reaches under her shirt to pull out -

Her FEEDING TUBE. Dee Dee kneels and begins to feed her the smoothie via the tube, using the syringe.

Gypsy looks back out the window. Dee Dee follows her gaze.

DEE DEE'S POV OUT THE WINDOW: Mel's porch. Other neighbors - the ones who got invited to Asshole, the card game - are leaving. Shelley lingers with Mel to smoke.

GYPSY
I like Mel. She's nice.

DEE DEE
(forces smile)
I.. I like her too. I don't know if
she likes me, though.

GYPSY
Everybody likes you, Mom.

DEE DEE
I think on this street, the one
everybody likes is Mel.

GYPSY
You and her could be friends, and
me and Lacey could be friends.
Wouldn't that be fun?

Gypsy beams at Dee Dee, who manages a thin smile.

GYPSY (CONT'D)
We should invite her over. Make
some gumbo. Everybody likes your
gumbo.

Silence from Dee Dee.

GYPSY (CONT'D)
Mom?

Dee Dee walks away. Looking for something.

GYPSY (CONT'D)
Mom? What're you doing?

Dee Dee is opening boxes, rifling through them.

DEE DEE
You know what? You're right.

She pulls a bunch of ratty old streamers out of a box.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)
We are going to make gumbo. And a
lot of other things too.
(pauses for effect)
And we are going to decorate.

CUT TO:

EXT/INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - DAY (2008)

A MONTAGE: Balloons everywhere. Streamers fluttering in the wind. A picnic table with a bright pink tablecloth. Children's party favors and hats everywhere. Quite the show.

PULL BACK to see the house, covered in junk. The effect is overwhelming, tacky. But also, touching and handmade. It's the work of people who are trying very hard to be liked.

EXT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER (2008)

A CHILD runs by, screaming playfully. **PULL BACK** to see

GYPSY

Parked in the little kids' area. Kids play tag around her. This is not where she wants to be.

The party is in full swing. At least FORTY PEOPLE here. GUNS 'N' ROSES PLAYING in the background.

DEE DEE

Is surrounded by neighbors holding drinks, including SHELLEY. They're all riveted.

DEE DEE

I mean, I *had* to go back. It belonged to my mom.

She shows the RING on her finger.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)

Well. The fridge was on the kitchen counter, the sofa was upside down, and the water was EVERYWHERE. They said it wasn't safe to go in. But I want to give this ring to Gypsy one day...

She checks for Gypsy and sees her among the kids.

ON GYPSY

Surrounded by the noisy little kids, but ignoring them. Looking off in another direction...

GYPSY'S POV: Lacey, haloed in light, idealized.

Luke plops himself down next to her.

He gallantly produces a CUPCAKE from behind his back. Piled with icing. Lacey looks at it skeptically.

LACEY

You know I'm only in it for the icing.

Luke considers this, then sweeps his finger across the top of the cupcake, offering Lacey a taste.

Lacey giggles, then licks it off his finger. Puppy love.

GYPSY WATCHES, filled with longing.

ON DEE DEE

As she glances across the street to see --

MEL, heading over, unsmiling. Purposeful.

Nervous, Dee Dee keeps talking:

DEE DEE

And it wasn't like my ex would've helped. He acted like he didn't even have a daughter.

The women in the crowd nod knowingly.

SHELLEY

We all know us some men like that.

DEE DEE

He couldn't have raised a tree. His car was his child, you know?

RANDOM NEIGHBOR

My husband's still like that.

They laugh. Then --

DEE DEE'S POV: As she notices Mel HUGGING another neighbor at the party. The picture of belonging.

DEE DEE

One time...
(pause, real hesitation)
I shouldn't tell you this.

SHELLEY

Oh, we've heard it all.

DEE DEE

Well... she was crying for hours one night. And he'd been out with his buddies doing whatever it was they did.

(MORE)

DEE DEE (CONT'D)

And when he came in the door, I said, "When are you going to start being a *father* to this child?"

(pause)

Well, his eyes went black, like something possessed him. Maybe it did, I don't know. I'm Catholic. I believe in the devil.

Heads bob again. Dee Dee pauses, like it's too upsetting to go on. But she manages:

DEE DEE (CONT'D)

And he picked her up - tiny two month old baby - picks her up by the THROAT. And he says... "Are you gonna shut it up, or should I?"

The neighbors gasp.

ON LUKE & LACEY

KISSING, oblivious to anything else. Lacey looks up, sees - Gypsy, forlorn. Lacey waves at her.

LACEY

Hey! Want to hang out with us?

Luke shoots Lacey a look: *Really?* Lacey ignores him.

Gypsy brightens and rolls towards the couple.

LUKE

(resigned)

Hey, Gypsy.

LACEY

How's it going? All right?

GYPSY

(laughs)

I guess so!

Gypsy is happy. Lacey lowers her voice.

LACEY

You have to help me keep an eye on things around here, okay? Seriously it's like *Desperate Housewives*. Lotta stuff going on.

GYPSY
 (conspiratorial whisper)
 Does your mom let you watch
Desperate Housewives?

LACEY
 Um, yeah --

LUKE
 Heyyyyyy!!!

Luke waving to a CAR that's pulled up, BLASTING MUSIC. He leaps up and goes over to talk to the TEENS in the car.

LACEY
 Shit.

She notices Gypsy's mouth agape at the four-letter word.

LACEY (CONT'D)
 Oh, sorry.

Luke waves her over, eager to get going.

LACEY (CONT'D)
 (standing up)
 I forgot - we're going to a movie.
 Probably something with Megan Fox
 and too many explosions.

GYPSY
 Oh! Can I come?

LACEY
 Um...

Lacey does think about it for a second. But she knows it's impossible. The other teenagers might make fun of Gypsy. She wants to protect her from that. So, awkwardly:

LACEY (CONT'D)
 Actually, I think your mom and
 all... like, she might not...
 (trails off)
 Yeah. I'm sorry.

GYPSY
 Okay.

LACEY
 We can watch a movie at your house
 sometime, okay?

Gypsy just nods. Lacey hurries off.

Gypsy's face falls in disappointment.

ON DEE DEE

Now sitting with Shelley, chatting. They've bonded.

DEE DEE

He has no job last I checked,
certainly no money we ever see. I
should have listened to my momma.
Mothers know.

SHELLEY

Damn straight.
(looking behind Dee Dee)
Oh, look who's up early!

Dee Dee turns. It's Mel, walking up. Dee Dee musters a friendly smile, though she's nervous.

ON GYPSY

Alone again, fiddling with her necklace, unhappy. Her gaze falls on a BIG TRAY OF CUPCAKES, with icing and sprinkles. Forbidden fruit. Rebellion.

Gypsy hesitates. Should she? No one is watching. So she steals closer and snatches a cupcake...

HER POV: Tempting CLOSE-UP of the FROSTING. Almost sensual.

Gypsy lifts a finger to scoop up frosting.

FLASH TO -- Lacey licking the frosting off Luke's finger.

Gypsy closes her eyes and begins to lick it off her own finger, closing her eyes and pretending to BE Lacey.

ON DEE DEE

Still with Shelley and the newly-arrived Mel. Dee Dee is wary. But diplomacy is the only option:

DEE DEE

I'm glad you came, Mel. Wouldn't be a neighborhood party without you!

MEL

I don't know about that.

SHELLEY

Did ya try the gumbo, Mel? We got us a chef here.

DEE DEE

Oh, it's nothing. Last- minute!

They wait for Mel, on cue, to ask for some. She doesn't.

SHELLEY

I'll getcha some.

Shelley wanders off. Mel does not waste time.

MEL

Look, Dee Dee. I ain't the type to keep my mouth shut. You know I saw what y'all were doing at the store.

A beat. Dee Dee's face crumples. She gestures to Mel to come a little bit away from the party with her.

DEE DEE

(almost gushing)

I'm so embarrassed. It's just... Gypsy deserves nice things once in awhile. I want to give them to her. But disability doesn't cover it. And her dad, you know, he's a deadbeat...

Mel shrugs.

MEL

I just think it's *funny*, this "Perfect Mom" act you got goin' --

DEE DEE

(stammering)

There's no act --

MEL

Oh, come on, Dee Dee. Cut the shit. You gotta admit, you did the whole sainthood act. Then you got your daughter helpin' you steal from the Target?

DEE DEE

I -

On Dee Dee, at a loss for words. Painful beat. The she spies, over Mel's shoulder, across the party:

Gypsy... with HALF A CUPCAKE in hand. Frosting on mouth.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)
 (across the party)
 Hey. Hey. *GYPSY!*

Mel flinches. Shelley - some distance away - looks taken aback. The entire party turns, startled, as -

Dee Dee **BOLTS** towards Gypsy.

Gypsy FREEZES as she sees -

Her mother GALLOPING towards her.

Gypsy's broken out in a sweat - even paler than usual. It looks like she's going into shock.

SHELLEY
 Dee - what's wrong??

DEE DEE
 She's allergic! She could die!

Dee Dee reaches Gypsy, yanks the EpiPen from the wheelchair. Expertly she uncaps it -

- and violently **JAMS** it into Gypsy's thigh.

The neighbors **GASP**.

Gypsy's now glassy-eyed, out of it.

Dee Dee rushes the wheelchair toward the van in the driveway, parting the crowd -

DEE DEE (CONT'D)
 Excuse me- I'm sorry- I have to get
 her to the emergency room-

Shame washes over Dee Dee. The party is ruined. The neighbors gape at her.

Even Mel is speechless, feeling a jolt of - is it sympathy?

Dee Dee loads Gypsy into the van. Two men scramble to help her, but everyone else isn't sure what to say or do.

Dee Dee turns to the neighbors -

DEE DEE (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry. Stay. There's- there's
 food still.

She leaps in the car, starts down the driveway.

Shelley shakes her head, bowls of gumbo in hand.

SHELLEY

There but for the grace of God.
That woman's been through *so much*.

MEL

(still thrown)
Yeah.

Something in Mel's face softens. Just a bit.

ACT FOUR

EXT. MEL'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT (2015)

Back in 2015, Lacey sits with Butler on the porch, looking tensely across the street at Dee Dee's house, where COPS cluster and talk on radios, etc -

Then Flores steps out of Dee Dee's house. She looks across the street at Butler and Lacey. Flores holds up one finger.

Lacey looks back and forth between the detectives, not understanding.

LACEY

What? What is it?

Lacey gets up. Flores walks towards them, hand outstretched in a universal gesture of "stop." Her silence only makes Lacey more agitated, and she rushes up to Flores -

- as Mel does the same. Mel and Lacey confront Flores together, mother and daughter anxious for answers -

LACEY (CONT'D)

What did you find?

MEL

You gonna tell us what's
going on now?

Flores looks from one to the other, stone-faced.

FLORES

(blunt)
We found Dee Dee. She's deceased.

A stunned silence. Mel and Lacey don't want to believe, don't know how to process. Finally -

MEL

Dead how?

FLORES
 I can't share details.
 (beat)
 But this is a murder investigation
 now.

Mel puts a hand to her mouth. Another beat. *Holy shit.*

And then it hits Lacey:

LACEY
 Where's Gypsy?
 (off their silence)
 Where's Gypsy??

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - LOBBY - NIGHT (2008)

CLOSE ON GYPSY'S FACE back in 2008 -

As Dee Dee emerges from the ER, wheeling Gypsy through the almost-empty lobby. Both pale and haggard.

Other than that, Gypsy seems okay. Still dazed from the EpiPen. Her hands nervously play with her necklace.

Dee Dee is stony. Gypsy keeps glancing at her. But Dee Dee is silent til they're out of anyone's earshot. Then:

DEE DEE
 Five minutes. That's what he said.

GYPSY
 I'm sorry.

DEE DEE
 What if I hadn't had the EpiPen?

GYPSY
 (almost whispering)
 I won't do it again.

They pass through the SLIDING DOORS, leaving the hospital -

EXT. HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT / CONTINUOUS (2008)

- and emerging into the night. Under the glowing "EMERGENCY" sign Dee Dee finally stops, calmly looks Gypsy in the eye:

DEE DEE
 You remember what happens if you
 have an allergic reaction?
 (MORE)

DEE DEE (CONT'D)
 Your throat closes up so you can't breathe. Your own body strangles you. Five minutes and I would have lost you forever. Is that what you want?

Gypsy miserably shakes her head NO.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)
 Then why don't you listen to me?

GYPSY
 (quavering, childlike)
 I'll listen.

DEE DEE
 You say that...

GYPSY
 (very softly)
 I will. I'll listen...

Dee Dee gradually softens. She can only be cold to her daughter for so long.

DEE DEE
 (relenting)
 I'm just mad because I love you,
 Gyps. You scared me.

Dee Dee is crying now. She clasps Gypsy's hands. An emotional mother-daughter moment.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)
 (wiping her eyes)
 Wow... Jeez... Look at us...

She laughs through tears. Then -

MEL (O.S.)
 Dee Dee.

Dee Dee turns, startled. To see - Mel approaching from the darkness of the parking lot. She's smoking a cigarette.

Dee Dee steels herself as Mel comes towards them.

MEL (CONT'D)
 How's she doing?

DEE DEE
 She'll be okay. What are you doing here?

GYPSY plays with the hem of her dress. As though not listening.

Mel shrugs. Uncomfortable.

MEL

Looking for you, I guess. To say sorry.

DEE DEE

(beat, suspicious)

Sorry how?

MEL

You gonna make this hard?

Dee Dee starts to speak, then stops herself. Mostly because she isn't sure what to say and doesn't want to fuck this up. Mel shakes her head, frustrated.

MEL (CONT'D)

11 years ago, when Lacey's daddy used my head to put a dent in the drywall -

(touches her hair)

- gave me a dent too, right here - I put my girls in the car and took off. Not \$50 to my name. And I did some shit, I mean, I ain't ashamed, but I wouldn't put it on my grave. So.

(hesitates, shakes head)

You and me are pretty different.

Maybe like rubbing two cats together at first, huh? But. We are neighbors. So. Might as well start over. You need something, knock on my door, all right?

Dee Dee nods, surprised. Mel nods, starts to turn away.

DEE DEE

I just, um.

She trails off but Mel turns back. And Dee Dee's voice is quiet but full of emotion:

DEE DEE (CONT'D)

I just want a fresh start so bad.

MEL

(knows the feeling)

Well. Yeah.

GYPSY has stopped playing with the hem. But she's still looking at her lap. Thinking.

Dee Dee looks Mel in the eye, emotional.

DEE DEE

I don't want people to see us how they did in Louisiana. Because I got a... a few misdemeanors and such. I... got a reputation. People looked at me like I was nothing... And I kind of was. Something went so wrong for me, I don't know where or when... But this little girl...
 (beat, and this is everything)
 Being her mom is the only thing I've ever known how to do right.

Suddenly Dee Dee HUGS MEL, who is too surprised to react.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)

God, it feels good to meet somebody who gets it.

Off Gypsy watching this hug, FADE TO -

EXT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - NIGHT (2008)

Establishing. Later that night. Most of the lights are off.

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT (2008)

Gypsy closes her eyes, baby-like, as Dee Dee gently pats and scrubs her face...

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT (2008)

Gypsy wraps her arms around her mom's neck, and Dee Dee lifts her out of her wheelchair.

Dee Dee lowers Gypsy to the bed, then tucks her in, kissing her forehead.

Then from a box beside the bed, Dee Dee produces a CPAP MASK and lovingly straps it onto Gypsy's face. The CPAP machinery HUMS TO LIFE, pumping air into Gypsy's lungs.

DEE DEE

(softly)
 Goodnight, hon.

As Dee Dee leaves, we linger on Gypsy. Slowly Gypsy turns her head to the side.

HER POV: The NECKLACE, hanging beside the bed.

ON GYPSY - Longing. MATCH CUT TO -

INT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT (2008)

LACEY'S FACE, in the flickering glow of the movie, bored. Her gaze drifts around the theatre, settling on --

A TEENAGE BOY, GANGLY. Nothing like Gypsy - except he's in a WHEELCHAIR. Clapping and laughing at the screen.

Lacey's expression changes. Guilt, maybe.

Then it passes. She nuzzles Luke, looks back at the movie...

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT (2008)

Dee Dee, in a nightgown, stares at herself in the mirror.

She takes a bottle from the medicine cabinet. "Claudinnie Blancharde, Xanax, 1mg AS NEEDED."

She swallows three pills, then discards the bottle. And then she looks under the sink, revealing: At least TEN other bottles of Xanax, all for "Claudinnie Blancharde".

She downs THREE MORE PILLS. MATCH CUT TO --

INT. LOCAL BAR - NIGHT (2008)

Mel, downing a beer --

At a rundown bar, with a MALE FRIEND who has his hand on her lower back. Having a very different night, and living a very different life from Dee Dee.

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT (2008)

CLOSE ON DEE DEE settling into bed with a sigh.

As she gets snug, PULL BACK SLOWLY TO ONLY NOW REVEAL -

Gypsy lies beside her, asleep. They sleep in the same bed.

Dee Dee turns off the light. Settles down to sleep.

WE SLOWLY PAN AROUND THE DARK ROOM. Faintly from outside a DOG BARKS. We land on an ALARM CLOCK. It reads 10:00 p.m.

DISSOLVE TO the clock reading 10:47 p.m. Light snoring from Dee Dee.

...and finally we return to Gypsy. To reveal:

Gypsy is awake.

She looks over at her mom. Making sure Dee Dee is asleep.

Then Gypsy carefully removes the CPAP mask and sits up. Sweeps her legs to the side, dangles her feet off the bed.

She looks around. At her WHEELCHAIR. At the open window, and the CURTAIN SOFTLY RUSTLING. PUSH IN ON THE CURTAIN. MATCH CUT to what it reminds her of -

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK (2008)

- A SOFTLY RUSTLING CURTAIN in the E.R.

The curtain encircles a gurney where Gypsy is sitting.

This is earlier in the afternoon - the part we didn't see. When Gypsy was actually in the Emergency Room. But before we see any more of it, we go BACK TO -

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUED) (2008)

Gypsy, still sitting up, in the dark bedroom.

CLOSE ON HER FEET, dangling motionless off the edge of the bed. Then, suddenly -

The right foot descends gracefully to the floor.

After a beat, the left foot comes down too.

WIDE TO REVEAL: Gypsy STANDING, ghostlike in her nightgown.

Because **GYPSY IS NOT PARALYZED. She can walk.**

She glances back at her sleeping mom. Then she softly walks out of the room.

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT (2008)

Gypsy enters the kitchen. She pauses, then opens a pantry to reveal a HUGE STOCK OF MEDICATIONS.

She takes an EPIPEN from the cabinet. Looks at it. Nervous.

She opens the fridge. Takes out a CAN OF WHIPPED CREAM.

She sets the whipped cream on the counter beside the EpiPen. Looks at them, weighing a decision.

Then - nervously - she DOTS HER FINGERS WITH WHIPPED CREAM.

She sticks each finger in her mouth and LICKS OFF THE WHIPPED CREAM. Savoring the thrill. Testing fate.

Nervously she looks at the EpiPen. Waiting for the shock come on, as promised.

She looks at her hands. Clenches and unclenches them. Are they going to swell? Off her face, MATCH CUT TO -

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - AFTERNOON (FLASHBACK) (2008)

GYPSY'S FACE earlier today. In that same E.R. flashback.

Gypsy still sitting on the gurney. Listening. And peering through a GAP in the curtains...

GYPSY'S POV: Partial view of a DOCTOR talking with Dee Dee...

DEE DEE

Gypsy knows better... she's always had to be careful...

DOCTOR

No, I'm sorry, but...

DEE DEE

I tell her and tell her...

DOCTOR

No - it's not possible, Mrs. Blanchard. The Ensure you give her is full of sugar. Your daughter does not have a sugar allergy.

Off Gypsy's face. Processing this. Thinking. We go BACK TO -

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT (2008)

Gypsy, standing at the counter... Waiting for an allergic reaction that never came.

It's been long enough, and Gypsy is now convinced: *What the doctor said was true.*

She does not have a sugar allergy.

She slowly puts the EpiPen back in the cabinet.

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (2008)

Gypsy softly walks into the living room.

She stops, bending forward -- and TOUCHES HER TOES.

Then sweeps her arms back up, standing on tiptoes, stretching to the sky.

Cracks her neck. Relief.

INT. BLANCHARD HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT (2008)

Gypsy slips back into the bedroom - and stops.

Dee Dee is sitting up in bed, staring at her. Awake.

They look at one another. Dee Dee with reproachful but unsurprised eyes. We realize: Dee Dee knows she can walk.

Gypsy stares back with guilt - but also a hint of defiance. Because she doesn't fully trust her mom anymore.

DEE DEE
What did I tell you?

GYPSY
It's dark. Nobody saw.

DEE DEE
I know it's dark. What did I tell you?

Gypsy doesn't answer.

DEE DEE (CONT'D)
You're weak. And the more you walk
around, the weaker you get.
(then, gently)
Get in bed.

Gypsy hesitates. Then obediently approaches the bed. Joins her mom under the covers.

Dee Dee looks at her for a long moment, devoted and fearful all at once. She kisses Gypsy's head, softly. Then settles back down to sleep, closing her eyes.

Gypsy stays curled up beside her - but does not close her eyes. STAY ON HER FACE, in a pool of moonlight from the window. PUSH IN SLOWLY.

Off Gypsy's face, very still but deep in thought...

FADE TO BLACK.
THEN FADE IN:

EXT. MEL'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH (2015)

We're back to 2015. Lacey's eyes are red, her nose is running. She has a tissue but it's wadded up in her hand.

She's watching Flores and the other cops urgently talk. Mel is off to the side, talking to Shelley, shaking her head.

Lacey snuffles. She's pale, conflicted. Coming to a decision. Abruptly she walks toward Flores.

LACEY

Detective? *Detective.*
 (getting her attention)
 There's something I should maybe
 tell you.

Flores senses this might be important. Steps aside with her.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Last year... well, there were these
 messages, she sent me, on Facebook.

FLORES

What kind of messages?

LACEY

Well, questions. And... I was
 trying to be a good big sister. I
 was trying to help her understand,
 you know, understand some of the
 stuff she was feeling.
 (deep breath)
 About, you know... boys. And... she
 told me she... had a secret...

FLORES

(spit it out)
What?

LACEY

(halting)
 Gypsy told me she had a boyfriend.

CUT TO:

EXT. A BEACH - DAY (FANTASY) (2008)

CLOSE ON GYPSY'S FEET - half-buried in wet sand. Scrunching her toes, feeling it squish. Then the end of a WAVE slithers up over her ankles, the water rushing past.

THEN UP TO FLOWING, GLOSSY DARK BROWN HAIR - Gypsy's image of her true self now has movie-star hair.

WIDE TO REVEAL - Gypsy standing at the edge of the ocean. She looks beautiful in her dress.

Beside her stands the surreal ANIMATED PRINCE, a dream of a man, unformed and shifting - an idea waiting to be fully defined in her imagination.

The surf at their feet is loud, really CRASHING now, like the waves have been churned up by something.

They're watching A STORM form out over the ocean.

Gypsy looks at her Prince.

GYPSY
Take me away from here.

END OF PILOT

