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## Discovering Caroline

Jon Meyers

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DISCOVERING CAROLINE

A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty in the Department of English  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, Kentucky

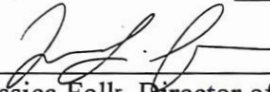
In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Fine Arts

By  
Jon Meyers

August 2021

DISCOVERING CAROLINE

Date Recommended 06/28/2021

  
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## DISCOVERING CAROLINE

Jon Meyers

August 2021

126 Pages

Directed by: Jessica Folk, Nancy Dinan, and Peggy Otto

Department of English

Western Kentucky University

*DISCOVERING CAROLINE* is the script for an ensemble, a feature-length supernatural drama, set in 1899. Caroline, presumed dead at birth, returns forty years later to the scene of that tragedy, a university nursing school training hospital, where her birth mother still works as a lunch lady. Surrounded by a dozen other characters (thirteen if you count the pig), played against a backdrop of a handful of supernatural events, this script explores familiar love, romantic love, inappropriate love, truth, deceit, death, and the consequences on others when these life events intertwine throughout seventy-seven scenes. Included here is an introduction as well as the entire 114 page screenplay which consists of those seventy-seven scenes.

## Introduction

In the last two years, I have written a feature, three television pilots, and a narrative podcast/radio pilot. Prior to that, I had written five or six features and a handful of short scripts. Every one of those scripts (with one exception) has been an ensemble comedy, usually an ensemble romantic comedy.

### **WHY ALL ENSEMBLES ARE NOT THE SAME**

An ensemble film usually consists of ten to fifteen characters who have more or less equal amounts of screen time. Sometimes, but not always, one or two characters can serve in the traditional role of a protagonist (or in the case of two characters, dual protagonists). For instance, in the case of Peter Bogdanovich's ensemble drama *The Last Picture Show* (1971), adapted from the Larry McMurtry novel of the same name, there are twelve main characters (plus another seven with speaking roles). Yet, most general audiences and film critics alike would tell you that those twelve characters -- with more or less equal screen time -- nevertheless revolve around the story of Sonny and Duane, two high school seniors. One can make the case easily that those two characters serve as dual protagonists, yet by definition the film is still an ensemble. Compare that to Robert Altman's *Nashville* (1975) with twenty-four main characters, also with equal screen time, but with no discernable central character. In *Nashville*, there are four simultaneous storylines, and the characters tend to cluster together in four separate groups to serve those four stories -- however, they are not strictly bound to those specific stories. They do occasionally cross between storylines, and all wind up together at the end of the third act for a giant concert at Nashville's Parthenon.

My general proclivities tend to lean towards the Bogdanovich model. Generally, I usually have twelve to sixteen characters (although I have had, at times, up to eighteen). There is usually then a central story, the A Story, involving a lead character's struggles, with a B Story and a C Story. Even though all the characters have approximately the same amount of screen time, the stories they serve do not. The A Story has the most time, the B Story the second amount of time, the C Story (when there is one) has the least amount of time. I should note that when I say time, I mean time on screen. The average script page is said to equate by a page-to-screen time ratio of 1:1, wherein one page equals one minute of screen time. A recent study puts that number more accurately at 1:1.19, or one page equals one minute, eleven seconds. (Eleven seconds is 19/100ths of a minute.) So even though, in my scripts, most of the ensemble are in close to the same number of scenes, one or two characters will dominate in terms of minutes-on-screen. In terms of story focus, I would be influenced by Bogdanovich, but in terms of screen time, I am definitely an Altmanite. Another influence on my work is Wes Anderson. Anderson, like Altman, deals with a large cast of characters, and usually has one or two central figures. In *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001), the family patriarch is the central character, by default, as all of the other characters (twelve others to be exact) revolve around him, and the story revolves around his (at first, fake) illness. And yet, Royal (played by Gene Hackman) has about the same amount of screen time as anyone else, and less screen time than his ex-wife Etheline (played by Angelica Huston). Most of Anderson's other films have similar breakdowns. Accordingly, Anderson combines the "central character" aspect of Bogdanovich with the "equal time, yet no discernable single protagonist" aspect of Altman, in the *Royal Tenenbaums*, as well as most of his other films.



So even though I stated earlier that my general proclivities lean towards Bogdanovich, for *DISCOVERING CAROLINE*, one can definitely see the influences – just as you can in Anderson’s work – of both Bogdanovich and Altman. There are two central characters, Caroline and Harriette, and eleven other main characters for a total of thirteen. There is also an important pig; so if you count him, you are at fourteen characters.

### **WHY NOT ANOTHER ROMANTIC COMEDY?**

Honestly, since this is my thesis project, I thought I should challenge myself by writing something I have never written before. I knew I would be making it harder on myself to write outside my preferred genre (and believe me, it was), but I thought that by forcing myself to exercise a new muscle, in doing so I would increase my flexibility (and eventual marketability) as a writer. Essentially, there were two ways to do that – switch genres or not write an ensemble. Remember I said I had always written ensembles “with one exception” earlier? That one exception was last semester when I wrote an adaptation of *Bartleby the Scrivener* with only six characters. I had already started this script, but I forced myself to limit the number of characters with that adaptation to see if I could do it. I got an A on it, so I guess I proved I could do it – but it was not that challenging to write. In fact, I had to introduce a seventh character, just to keep myself interested. I had proven that limiting characters was not something I ever want to do again. Since that option was off the table, I stuck with the decision to hop genres.

I already knew I was going to write something supernatural, but supernatural what? Supernatural thriller? Supernatural mystery? Supernatural comedy? I settled on supernatural drama, again because it was the opposite of anything I had ever before tackled. Plus, I had some more reasons to rule out the other options. Thrillers are

expensive to make, and the scripts that are selling these days from new voices are for lower budget films. I already was going to have a large cast, which could potentially raise the cost -- and it being a period piece would definitely raise the cost. Post-COVID Hollywood – with rare exceptions such as Marvel movies – is mostly investing in lower-budget films. A thriller would be out of the question. The reason I chose to not write a mystery, to me, is more interesting than cost considerations. Mysteries have to be resolved, buttoned up. I have enjoyed more and more lately surreal movies such as *TENET* or television programs such as David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, in which you knew going in that you would come out without all the answers. Furthermore, I really enjoyed the surreal chapters I wrote in Dr. Dinan's fiction class for the novel I have started. Being freed from some real-world realities, while simultaneous being bound by others -- and being allowed to choose which realities fell into which of those two categories -- seemed irresistible.

David Lynch almost never explains what is going on during the surreal moments in his films. Like a song, or a painting, he wants the audience to apply their own interpretation. Lynch says, "There is a circle that goes from the audience to the film and back. Each person is looking and thinking and feeling and comes up with his or her own sense of things" (wikiquotes). Lynch doubles down on that sentiment when he says, "Well everybody has their own kind of take on things. A lot of people see things... it's all in the mind's eye -- different viewers get so many different things" (Wise). In case there is any doubt on Lynch's stance, it is, simply put, that all meaning is personal:

...it makes me uncomfortable to talk about meanings and things it is better not to know so much about what things mean. Because the meaning it's a

very personal thing and the meaning for me is different than that meaning for someone else. (*SSX Film Studies*)

### **WHY IS RESEARCH NECESSARY IN A FICTIONAL STORYWORLD?**

Especially in a surreal supernatural screenplay, it is important to ground your story in researchable provable facts so your audience will give you the suspension of disbelief you need for the surreal moments. I would be exaggerating, but not by much, if I stated that I had to research every noun in this screenplay. For the very first scene, I had to research gloves. Did they have rubber gloves back in 1899? They did, but they were not used for childbirth because they were too expensive. Also, when they wore cotton gloves, medical professionals were constantly having to change them because they would become contaminated with blood so quickly. Also, in the first scene, someone is sitting in a folding chair. Did they have those back in 1899? Yes, but just barely – the first patent for a folding chair was issued in 1855. What kind of baths did they have? In the 1890s, institutions and even some river cities (yes, even some in Pennsylvania) had floating bath houses, eventually replaced by regular public bath houses, eventual closed down by the Spanish Flu pandemic in 1918. All of these facts, and countless more, worked their way into *DISCOVERING CAROLINE*.

A very important element was the soda bottle which actually came to prominence in 1899 when *DISCOVERING CAROLINE* takes place. Prior to 1899, soda was sold at soda fountains by the glass. The bottle, thicker than a Mason jar, and significantly larger than today's bottles, were new. In one scene, all five of the girls are present when they discover a stash of soda bottles; yet, only two of them know what they are. It is not super important to the story, but a little Easter egg is hidden in the names of those two girls – in

that they come from competing soda magnate families, which is why they knew about the bottles. What is more important to the story is that the existence of such a big heavy bottle is a *twitch*. A *twitch* is a screenwriting element, a craft technique, in which the writer employs a symbolic prop -- often reoccurring, and in my case, always reoccurring -- of which the audience eventually learns the significance of that prop later in the script. You will see this twitch over and over in *DISCOVERING CAROLINE*, and one of these heavy bottles plays a significant role in a pivotal scene in this script. You will even see it reappear again in the final ending.

### **WHY THIS (THESE) ENDING(S)?**

Although the ending to *DISCOVERING CAROLINE* is unconventional, I still consider myself a fairly traditional storyteller. I believe a story should have a beginning, a middle, and an end -- and those elements should be (with the exception of a rare flashback) linear. Jon Meyers, for better or for worse, will not ever write a non-linear story like *TENET* (2020). I believe structure that is sequential is usually more effective. As evidenced in the previous section on research, I believe in pre-planning. I am always, with every word, with every scene, mindful of the rollercoaster on which I am putting my audience. It cannot be all slow inclines, nor can it be all two-hundred foot drops. The way the writer ensures that, though, is with a strong structure. No matter what our age is, we have acquired a cultural inventory built up of all of the media we have consumed up until our current age. Combine that with the fact that our DNA is programmed with Circadian rhythms to respond to dark and light. Our very beings expect to exist in a day with a beginning, a middle, and an end. If you have ever visited a part of the globe where they have no night, it really messes with one's core. As such, we are both programmed by our cultural inventory -- and pre-programmed by our Circadian rhythms

to expect a beginning and a middle and an end in everything: our calendar day, our workday, our church services, our meals, and yes, our entertainment. You know that unsettling feeling you get when a film does not quite end all the way or ends too early? Universally, audiences get that same feeling. Not because they are script experts, but because they are first preprogrammed and then later programmed to expect a well-structured beginning, middle, and an end. Do not believe me? What if we saw the whole shark in the first five minutes of *Jaws* or the entire demogorgon in the first episode of *Stranger Things*? What if the final episode of *Lost* was the third episode of Season One? The order in which events are revealed matters.

Although technically a movie can have only one actual ending, the final image, a screenwriter has the luxury of employing various tools to leave the audience with the strongest emotional wallop possible. One of those tools is using the one-two punch of tagging on a *cookie* after the original ending. A *cookie* is short for *after-credit cookie*, which is the additional little snippet we see after a movie's credits roll (or sometimes during the credits). From Animal in *The Muppet Movie* (1979) and Ferris Bueller in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986) telling the post-credit audience to "Go home!" to the modern-day Marvel characters setting up the next sequel, using a post-credit cookie is an effective way of going back for a second bite of the apple (or I guess, cookie, in this case) that is your story. Although not completely without precedent, in *DISCOVERING CAROLINE*, I chose to go back for a rare third bite.

As has already been established, I like to leave interpretation up to the audience rather than spoon feed them. As a storyteller, I do however also feel a responsibility to provide a sense of closure -- but I also want the audience to share in that responsibility for what that closure might mean for them. Writing ensembles opens up many

opportunities for me to do this – but also presents a challenge. In 1995, Paul Lautner wrote in reference to Altman’s *Nashville* that it was “...a post structuralist theoretical text which invites, indeed valorizes, contradiction and seems designed to resist closure” and that “...interpretations of the film have been wildly divergent and evaluations contradictory” (197). This challenge, identified by Lautner, steered my decision to use a tri-fold ending. In this paper, I am referring to the three as first ending, second ending, third ending, but that is just for identification terms. They really are not three separate endings, but more like three distinct aspects of my script’s ending. Just as an egg needs the white, the yolk, and the shell to be an egg, this ending needs all three parts to be a complete ending.

The first ending you will read is the montage. Montages generally exist to show a passage of time, or flesh out character aspects, or both. Choosing to end a script with a montage is a bold choice. Choosing to end a script with a black-and-white (MOS) montage is even bolder. *MOS* means there is no sound. Legend has it that *MOS* stands for *mit out sound* when in early Hollywood many sound editors were German immigrants. *MOS* means absolutely no sound: no dialogue, no music, no room tone. (Room tone is the sound an empty room makes. Do not say a word and listen to the empty room where you are right now. That is room tone.) *MOS* is stark and unsettling; to me, the perfect choice to end a supernatural drama. Like it or hate it, you will remember it. It is also a bookend to my use of *MOS* in the opening scene. I chose black-and-white to separate it as a coda to the narrative we have just seen. I chose to start the montage by showing all the girls together around the dining table, just as we saw them all for the first time around the campfire together towards the beginning of the film. I chose to end the montage with a *FREEZE FRAME* on Caroline and Head Nurse Hampton. I

wanted to end the film on Caroline. The first ending provides emotional closure for us with most of the characters.

The second ending, the scene in the morgue, back in color, is necessary because the first ending did not answer one of the central mysteries of the entire film. It provides the audience with some closure in terms of the puzzle pieces, but still leaves enough openness for their own interpretation. The bloody glove is a bookend for the opening scene's bloody glove. The same is true for the earthquake tremor. Plus, I like a happy ending. Not a traditional happy ending (after all, it is in a morgue), it is still more emotionally satisfying than where we were prior to the montage. This morgue scene would have been the cookie, except I still was not finished.

The third ending, the cookie in this script, provides the viewer with several things. First of all, I'm Jon Meyers and quirky over-the-top positivity is part of my brand. I needed to put the viewer/reader at ease that everyone was well after the earthquake tremor in the second ending. It gives you emotional closure for the two characters you did not see in the montage, and a reassurance for all the rest whom you did see in the montage. Secondly, it answers some more questions, such as why Nurse Con Con had what looked like a still in her office. Thirdly, the final step of Joseph Campbell's *Hero's Journey* is returning to the new normal with the elixir. I am not a giant fan of Joseph Campbell, but since I had the soda pop storyline, I had a literal elixir built into the story already. I thought it would be fun to use it. Fourthly, rather than ending in the dark morgue, I could end outside in the bright sunshine of the street and then inside in Ari's bright white store. Finally, the morgue ending, although necessary, did not include Caroline. As I stated in my discussion of the first ending, the story always needed to end with Caroline.

I have enjoyed sharing some of my process here. I look forward to continuing the discussion at a later date. My objective in writing *DISCOVERING CAROLINE* was to tell an entertaining yarn that would compel the audience to engage in some way with the questions the story addresses. It is first and foremost a work which I hope causes the audience to think about connections and come to their own conclusions. The world is not always black-and-white. It is okay to embrace the grey areas. It is also okay for each individual audience member to have agency over how much they want to embrace those grey areas.



DISCOVERING CAROLINE

written by

Jon Meyers

FADE IN:

INT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL OBSERVATION THEATER - DAY  
(MOS)

A large white wash basin filled to the top with water. A pair of white - but bloody -- cotton gloves float atop the water. Blood seeps into the water a bit.

The water is still.

INT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL OBSERVATION THEATER - DAY

The silence is interrupted by a pair of bloody white-gloved female HANDS SPLASHING into the water. She pulls the gloves off under water. A BABY SCREAMS.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
That's my last pair. I'm going to  
have to pull the second one out  
bare handed.

The hands scrub themselves underneath the water, which is now thoroughly red with blood. The hands leave the wash basin.

O.S. The BABY continues to WAIL.

The water again becomes still.

O.S. The BABY'S SCREAMS are joined by a WOMAN'S SCREAMS.

Water. Still. Blood seeping.

HEAD NURSE HAMPTON (O.S.)  
Ohhh, this one's a... such a  
pretty girl... Push, Miss  
Bezzenny. Push!

Bloody water remains still.

HEAD NURSE HAMPTON (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
If we can get her out, you're going  
to have one of ea-

The still bloody water begins to ripple violently.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)  
Tremors!

The bloody water, as well as the basin are both shaking so much that the water is splashing out of the basin.

MALE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

TREMORS!

CLOSE ON a man in a chair. The male voice belongs to HARRY TRUDNUCH (25, receding hairline), who sits in a folding chair next to the bloody water basin.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL half of the screaming in the room is coming from the new born baby boy Harry is uncomfortably holding.

HEAD NURSE HAMPTON (O.S.)

Earthquake!

Harry is livid. His face is red.

HARRY TRUDNICH

Not earth tremors! MY tremors! My heart!

Harry hands the screaming baby boy to a nurse.

HARRY TRUDNICH (CONT'D)

Take this. Why'd you even hand this thing to me?

CLOSE ON HARRY (SLOW MOTION)

Harry clutches his chest and falls to the ground.

CLOSE ON WATER BASIN (SLOW MOTION)

Simultaneously the water basin falls.

CLOSE ON HARRY (SLOW MOTION)

Harry hits the ground first. The bloody water basin lands upside down on him drenching him in blood.

BACK TO SCENE

There is chaotic pandemonium in the shaking university hospital observation theater lit by three giant candle stands. Objects are falling off the walls. Floor tiles are cracking.

The baby BOY held by the nurse is SCREAMING. Another nurse runs to collapsed Harry.

Back at the birthing bed, we see HEAD NURSE HAMPTON (40s, short hair) for the first time.

HEAD NURSE HAMPTON  
Push! One more push!"

HARRIETTE BEZZENNY (22, messy long hair) pushes.

As soon as the baby girl is out, Head Nurse Hampton picks her up. This BABY girl, the second twin, SCREAMS along with her brother. They are equally loud.

The earthquake knocks over two of the large candle stands and sets the back of the room on fire.

More pandemonium. Another nurse joins the first nurse tending to Harry. Except for both BABIES SCREAMING, mother HARRIETTE CRYING, and the sounds of the FLAMES CRACKLING, the room is somehow noticeably quieter and has at least stopped shaking.

Two more nurses with water buckets and towels are trying to put out the fire. One of the nurses is in a wheelchair, and is holding her own against the fire. In fact, she's doing better than the abled nurse.

The nurse trainee holding the screaming baby boy starts to hand him to mother Harriette, just as a large piece of METAL equipment CRASHES to the ground. Although Harriette reaches to receive her son, the trainee pulls back to protect him from the CRASH.

The nurse trainee does not complete the handoff. There are still two babies crying. Baby boy in the trainee's arms, and baby girl in Head Nurse Hampton's arms.

One of the two nurses tending to dad Harry, still on the floor, takes his pulse.

NURSE ONE  
He's dead.

There are still two BABIES CRYING. Until there is not.

The fire continues. One by one, each nurse looks up. They realize there is now only one BABY CRYING.

As the baby boy continues to cry in the trainee's arms, all heads turn to Head Nurse Hampton. Head Nurse Hampton bows her head. She closes the baby's eyes with her finger tips.

HEAD NURSE HAMPTON  
She's dead too.

The final remaining candle stand topples. It hits an oxygen tank. The room is engulfed in flames.

EXT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY - NIGHT

CLOSE ON GIANT FLAMES.

SUPER: BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA, 1899.

Then...

SUPER: FORTY YEARS LATER...

PULL BACK TO REVEAL the flames are those of a campfire -- in a wooded area behind the girl's dormitory. A woman, a nurse, CONNIE "CON CON" COMSTARE (58), in a wheelchair, tells a ghost story to a small group of female college students.

CON CON

And that's how Head Nurse Hampton became...

(beat)

...Peg Leg Hampton!!!!!!!!!!

All the NURSING STUDENTS around the campfire SCREAM! The loudest SCREAM comes from PEPPER PRIESTLY (22, red pigtails).

PEPPER

Is that how you lost your legs,  
Nurse Con Con?

The rest of the girls lean forward to hear the answer.

CON CON

Actually, seems like I've always been this way. I was born with only one leg.

(beat)

Tonight is NOT the night to tell you how I lost the other one.

Pepper looks disappointed. She looks to the other girls for back-up. MARLETTE MICHIGAN (22, always cold) sits almost in the fire. She is chatting with HATTIE HIRES (22, perky) who sits close to Marlette to help her stay warm.

As Marlette and Hattie chat, TILLIE TOYT (24, alert) watches them intently, snapping her head abruptly back-and-forth from girl to girl after each one finishes a sentence.

By contrast, BELLABEULAH (20) sits quietly still. The look on her face conveys she is lost in thought.

CON CON (CONT'D)  
She never did remarry, you know.

PEPPER  
Who?

CON CON  
Harriette.

Bellabeulah breaks her silence. Tillie's head jerks in Bellabeulah's direction.

BELLABEULAH  
Who?

CON CON  
Your lunch lady. Harriette,  
Harriette Bezzenny. The mother in  
the story I just told you.

Bellabeulah looks puzzled. Tillie's head jerks to Marlette.

MARLETTE  
(shivering)  
Sh-sh-she could never re-marry  
because--

HATTIE  
--she was never legally married to  
Harry Trudnich in the first place.

Tillie's head continues to jerk from speaker to speaker.  
Tillie's head always jerks.

CON CON  
Girls!

PEPPER  
They're just trying to help get  
Bellabeulah up-to-speed, Nurse Con  
Con.

MARLETTE  
J-j-just trying to help--

HATTIE  
--the new girl.

Hattie puts her arm around Marlette, and rubs it briskly,  
attempting to warm her up.

Con Con turns to clarify to Bellabeulah.

CON CON  
 You could say Harriette Bezzenny  
 and Harry Trudnich were common law  
 married.

MARLETTE  
 You could say that--

HATTIE  
 --but you'd be wrong.

CON CON  
 Girls!

Con Con again turns to Bellabeulah.

CON CON (CONT'D)  
 Never mind them, Bellabeulah. Why  
 don't you take a turn at telling us  
 a scary story? Your first ghost  
 story with us.

PEPPER  
 Yeah!

MARLETTE HATTIE  
 Yeah! Yeah!

Tillie's head swivels can't keep up with this chorus of  
 agreement.

Bellabeulah looks unsure.

BELLABEULAH  
 I don't know...

PEPPER  
 Story!

MARLETTE HATTIE  
 Story! Story!

Again, Tillie's jerking head can't keep up. Nevertheless, her  
 glance lands on Bellabeulah.

BELLABEULAH  
 Very well.

Everyone settles into place. Marlette is now nestled  
 underneath Hattie's arm.

BELLABEULAH (CONT'D)  
 You know the hitchin' post in front  
 our cafeteria?

(MORE)

BELLABEULAH (CONT'D)  
 How many horses you think can be  
 tied up side by side on that one?

Pepper is the first to answer.

PEPPER  
 Six?

BELLABEULAH  
 All right, Sure. Well the one in  
 my hometown, in front of the  
 Traveler's Inn, has one about half  
 that size.

PEPPER  
 So it would hold three?

BELLABEULAH  
 Sure. Or so you'd think...  
 (beat)  
 The Inn only has three rooms, so  
 I'm sure that was the hotel owner's  
 original intention.  
 (beat)  
 Three horses, three spots, left to  
 right.

Hattie pulls Marlette closer. Tillie's eyes are glued to  
 Bellabeulah.

BELLABEULAH (CONT'D)  
 'Cept the locals knew never to use  
 the middle spot.  
 (beat)  
 Bein' it's the *Traveler's* Inn. The  
 travelers from out of town weren't  
 so lucky.

MARLETTE  
 What do you--

HATTIE  
 --mean?

BELLABEULAH  
 Seems that every time The  
 Traveler's Inn has a full house,  
 whoever has tied up their horse in  
 the middle spot...  
 (beat)  
 ...meets a terrible fate.  
 (beat)  
 Every. Time.



PEPPER  
Every time?

BELLABEULAH  
Every. Time.

PEPPER  
What kinds of things happen?

BELLABEULAH  
There's no 'things.' You mean  
'thing.' The same 'thing' happens  
anytime anyone ties up a horse in  
that same second spot.

(beat)

The Traveler's Inn only fills up  
about a dozen times a year. All  
the holidays, the fall festival, a  
couple of weekends in the summer.

(beat)

Twelve uses of the second spot.  
Twelve times the same thing  
happens. Every year. Every time.

CON CON  
What happens?

BELLABEULAH  
When the out-of-town traveler comes  
out the next morning... their  
horse is...

(beat)

...gone.

Crickets.

Literal crickets. That's all we hear. The students are  
silent. They look around uncomfortably.

Extra long beat

Awkward.

MARLETTE  
Th-th-then--

HATTIE  
--what happens?

BELLABEULAH  
What do you mean? That's it.

More silence.

BELLABEULAH (CONT'D)  
The horse in the second spot is  
always missing!

Blank stares.

BELLABEULAH (CONT'D)  
As if they were never there?

Nothing.

Bellabeulah is decimated that her story fell flat. Hattie can't take the present uneasiness any longer. She jumps in to the rescue. Tillie's head snaps to Hattie.

HATTIE  
Wait. The Traveler's Inn?

Bellabeulah nods.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
In upstate New York?

Bellabeulah nods again.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
My uncle stayed there.

Hattie's voice takes on a dark and mysterious tone. She moves away a bit from Marlette, who looks confused.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
Bellabeulah set the stage  
perfectly. Every detail in place.  
Now let me tell you what happened  
to my uncle...

CON CON  
Hattie, you don't--

HATTIE  
--My uncle visited this Traveler's  
Inn just a few years ago. Ties up  
his horse...

Hattie turns to Tillie.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
Oh, you'll like this...  
(beat)  
...whose name was Tillie...

Tillie the human does a double take. Snap. Snap.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
 ...My uncle ties up Tillie, goes in  
 and pays for a one night stay,  
 comes back out, wipes her down for  
 the night.

Hattie leans forward, now completely out of Marlette's arms.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
 My uncle yanks twice on her lead  
 rope to make sure it was fastened  
 securely to the hitching post. It  
 was. He goes in and goes to sleep.

All the students and Nurse Con Con are focused on Hattie.  
 Marlette looks down at her fingernails.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
 My uncle came out the next morning,  
 and indeed his horse was missing.  
 The horses in Spot One and Spot  
 Three were untouched.  
 (beat)  
 He calls the Sherriff. Who does  
 nothing, of course.  
 (beat)  
 Now stranded, he's stuck in this  
 smalltown for one more night until  
 Sunday when the horse trader comes  
 to town, so he can buy a new horse.

Hattie now stands up and walks completely away from Marlette,  
 and towards Bellabeulah.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
 Unable to sleep, he's crushed.  
 He's not only lost his  
 transportation, he's lost his  
 dearest companion.  
 (beat)  
 He decides to go for a walk.

Hattie steps up behind Bellabeulah, and places her hand on  
 Bellabeulah's shoulder. Bellabeulah doesn't get up.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
 When my uncle exits the Inn, he  
 can't believe his eyes. There's  
 Tillie..

Hattie glances at Tillie the human.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
 ...Tillie the horse. Tied right  
 where he left her.  
 (beat)  
 He knew it was Tillie, because  
 oddest thing, Tillie was all  
 white... except for her face  
 markings were black and white...  
 (beat)  
 ...almost like a Holstein cow...

With her finger, Hattie draws a circle in the air around her  
 eye.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
 ...almost like a Holstein cow...  
 with a black bullseye marking  
 around the left eye.  
 (beat)  
 Anyway, atop Tillie is a blonde  
 woman, naked, Lady Godiva-style.  
 My uncle can't believe his eyes.

Everyone's eyes widen, including Marlette's.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
 He runs over to the hitching post,  
 ecstatic, and as he does, he shouts  
 'Tillie!!!' But as soon as her  
 name leaves his lips, Tillie  
 disappears into thin air.  
 (beat)  
 The Lady Godiva-lady tumbles  
 downward, but just as she is about  
 to hit the ground, a man appears  
 out of nowhere.

Everyone gasps.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
 The man, in a white flowing robe,  
 is down on all fours. Lady Godiva  
 lands on his back, pony ride-style.  
 (beat)  
 My uncle grabs the man and pulls  
 him up by the lapels. Lady Godiva  
 falls to the ground.  
 (beat)  
 'Who are you and what have you done  
 with my horse?' my uncle demands.

Everyone is on the edge of their seat.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
My uncle continues to shake the  
man. And then...

Hattie puts her second hand on Bellabeulah's other shoulder.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
The robed man and the naked woman  
evaporate into a mist. My uncle's  
grasp goes right through the man.  
They. Were. GHOSTS!!!

EVERYONE jumps and SCREAMS!

As EVERYONE is SCREAMING their lungs out, Bellabeulah lets  
out a little giggle of relief then tries to cover it. Hattie  
sees it, and smiles, then laughs with her. Marlette notices.

The laugh turns contagious; everyone minus Marlette, plus  
Nurse Con Con, laugh uncontrollably.

From out of nowhere...

ELIJAH TISHBAH (O.S.)  
Good evening, girls.

GIRLS  
AAAAaaaaaugh!!!

CON CON  
AAAAaaaaaugh!!!

In one swift move Hattie leaps back over to her original seat  
and jumps into Marlette's lap. Bellabeulah notices. Pepper  
and Tillie fan themselves relieved. Con Con looks stunned.

Provost ELIJAH TISHBAH (71) appears out of seemingly nowhere.  
He looks straight at Con Con.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
Ghost stories again, Miss Comstare?

CON CON  
Perhaps a few. You know, Provost  
Tishbah, the true ones are the  
best.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
Too soon, too soon...  
Some truths are meant to wait.

The girls give puzzling looks to each other.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)  
Get along now, girls. The walk  
back to the dorm is going to be a  
cold one.

Marlette is the first to jump up.

MARLETTE  
Yes, let's go.

The girls head off up through the wooded trail, with Marlette in the lead. Marlette keeps looking back over her shoulder to see Hattie and Bellabeulah right behind her. Tillie pushes Nurse Con Con in her chair, with Pepper to their side.

Until...

Con Con wheels herself away from Tillie, pops a wheelie, past Pepper, past Bellabeulah/Hattie, and pulls up alongside Marlette.

CON CON  
Let's race!

Con Con and Marlette take off and leave the rest behind. As the remnant continue up the trail, they begin a sing-songy chant.

ALL THE GIRLS  
Who and What We Care About /  
Are Valued More Than Truth, No  
Doubt  
(beat)  
Families Disrupt, It's Guaranteed /  
Tishbah U Is All We Need

The girls repeat the chant over and over as they fast walk, with exact precision, almost militarily, off into the dark.

BACK TO CAMPFIRE

Tishbah stares into the fire, troubled.

FADE TO:

INT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Harriette Bezzenny (now 62, white hair) is at work, dolloping scoops of cafeteria food onto the trays of nursing students.

CARL TRUDNICH (now 40, combover) goes through the line.

Lost in her work, Harriette dollops a heaping ladle of turnips onto Trudnich's tray. SPLORT.

She lifts one eye, quickly glancing over the top of her glasses, and sees it is Trudnich.

She puts her head down. Two more ladles. SPLORT. SPLORT.

Harriette doesn't look up, but Trudnich is staring a hole into the top of her head.

TRUDNICH

More.

Harriette dollops out one more heaping ladle full. SPLLLLORT.

TRUDNICH (CONT'D)

(impatiently)

More.

Harriette ignores the final demand and slides the plate over to Trudnich.

HARRIETTE

No more. It will ruin your appetite for dinner.

She waves him away with her spoon.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)

Start walking...

Trudnich picks up his tray, begins walking, then looks back over his shoulder.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)

...and don't be late for dinner.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

A stagecoach approaches a T in the road, and halts to an abrupt stop. The coachman's arm pushes a thin woman in a beige dress out of the coach. She falls to the ground by the side of the road.

Into the mud.

She looks up. She is eye to eye with a pig.

~~Into the mud.~~ Into pig manure.

As the coach pulls away to the left, the coach's driver from up top, points down the road to the right.

DRIVER

Tishbah University is a mile down that way.

Caroline panics.

CAROLINE

My trunk!

A large trunk flies out of the coach, landing in the manure -- which splashes more manure onto Caroline.

Caroline slips and staggers as she tries to stand up. She addresses the pig.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

What are you looking at?

Caroline shifts a bit, from one foot to another. Something is off. She balances her self on one foot, and takes her shoe off.

The pig is still watching her. Caroline notices, for the first time, the unique copper color of the pig.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

(to the pig)

You are NOT coming with me.

Caroline pours a long stream of thick dark brown liquid out of her shoe on to the ground. Some of it splashes on the pig.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Sorry about that.

INT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Harriette pours a long stream of really brown liquid out of her ladle on to mashed potatoes on a plate. Some of it splashes onto a slice of ham.

And onto PITHY STOTTLE's (36) biologist's lab coat. It is Pithy's plate Harriette is filling.

HARRIETTE

Sorry about that.

Pithy tries to brush the splatter away.

PITHY

Don't worry. Believe me, by the end of the day, I'll have a lot more toxic substances splattered on this coat than your gravy.

HARRIETTE

I wouldn't be so sure.



EXT. ROAD TO TISHBAH UNIVERSITY - DAY

Caroline walks down the dirt road, in the hot sun, sweaty and dirty, dragging the trunk.

Two teenage boys speed by on horses, kicking up clouds of dirt -- with a couple mud clods in them. The additional dirt adds to the dirt already on Caroline.

INT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Pithy and Harriette are still mid-conversation. Trudnich rudely cuts in line in front of Pithy. He slides the tray back at Harriette.

TRUDNICH

Needs more salt.

Harriette glumly dumps way too much salt on Trudnich's turnips. She pushes the plate back at him.

Trudnich wets his finger, touches the top of the salt, puts his finger in his mouth. He starts to say something, doesn't bother, turns, and walks away.

PITHY

I do lament never having gone  
though childbirth.

HARRIETTE

I--

PITHY

You don't have to tell me. I know  
I've still got a little time, very  
little, but--

HARRIETTE

I--

PITHY

I know, it's eighteen-ninety-nine,  
and the securities market is  
tanking...is that the kind of world  
to bring a chi--

HARRIETTE

I hated being a mother. Raising  
Carl robbed me of my youth.

EXT. ROAD TO TISHBAH UNIVERSITY - DAY

Still walking down the same dirt road toward Tishbah University, still dragging the trunk, sweaty and dirty, Caroline wipes the sweat from across her brow with her right hand.

Suddenly her hand is not the only hand across her face.

A street bandit grabs Caroline from behind. His right hand is over her mouth. His left forearm is around her waist. As they struggle, three other bandits on horseback ride up from behind the first.

One bandit serves as lookout, and he is also holding the lead rope to the first bandit's horse. The two other bandits dismount and break open Caroline's trunk.

As the two bandits grab everything out of Caroline's trunk and stuff her belongings into their loot sacks, Caroline bites her assailant's hand. Hard. She draws blood.

The first STREET BANDIT WAILS in agony. He lets loose of Caroline, and doubles over in pain. Caroline spits out a sizeable chunk of his flesh and it hits him in the face.

The first street bandit coils back to hit her, but Caroline realizes she has another human's blood in her mouth and starts to gag violently. The first street bandit freezes.

The two bandits with the spoils signal to the lookout they are finished. The lookout rides over to the first bandit, and yanks him up by the collar. He literally lifts him up off the ground by his shirt, and plops him down on his horse.

All of Caroline's worldly possessions are now gone.

Caroline looks at the busted open empty trunk. She cries.

As the street bandits ride off, through her tears Caroline sees her muddy copper-colored pig friend she left behind earlier -- clearly dead -- tied to the back of one of the bandit's horses.

Caroline sobs harder.

INT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Trudnich sits in a back corner of the lunchroom's large cafeteria, finishing his salty turnips, at the complete opposite end of the lunchroom from the food counter, where Harriette is still working.

In the middle of the large cafeteria, about halfway between Trudnich and Harriette, Pithy is lost deep in thought. She looks in Harriette's direction.

Is Harriette crying?

EXT. ROAD TO TISHBAH UNIVERSITY - DAY

Still walking down the same dirt road toward the University, now dragging the remnants of a broken and busted trunk, Caroline is defeated. A white horse approaches from behind.

Atop the white horse sits Provost Tishbah. About five feet behind Tishbah, tied to his horse with a lead rope, is what appears to be a donkey.

Caroline appears part-petrified, part-angry.

CAROLINE

Don't come near me!

Tishbah stops where he's at, seven or eight feet away from her. He doesn't get off his horse.

ELIJAH TISHBAH

Where you headed?

CAROLINE

Get away from me!

ELIJAH TISHBAH

Need a ride somewhere?

CAROLINE

I said 'Get away from me!'

ELIJAH TISHBAH

Look. I'm trying to help.

CAROLINE

I don't need help.

Tishbah surveys Caroline's predicament, her broken trunk. He remains non-judgmental. Caroline refuses to look him in the eye.

ELIJAH TISHBAH

Look. About a third of a mile up this road... in the direction you appear to be heading... is Tishbah University. I'm Provost Tishbah.

Tishbah moves his horse one step closer. Caroline backs up by one step. He reaches down and offers her his hand. Caroline refuses to take it.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)  
 Looks like you could use help with whatever that is you're packing, and I just so happen to have a pack mule with me, so tell you what...

Caroline finally looks up and glances at the mule.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)  
 I'd love to help, but since you'll have nothing of it, let's do this.  
 (beat)  
 Take my mule.

CAROLINE  
 Take your mule?

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 Take my mule.

Caroline considers.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)  
 You'll be on campus in probably fifteen minutes. Tie her up outside the cafeteria, I'll come by and pick her up later tonight."

Caroline stares blankly.

CAROLINE  
 Cafeteria.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 You'll probably want to wash up first, but Harriette's going to be shutting down the cafeteria in about forty-five minutes.

Caroline's mind is elsewhere.

CAROLINE  
 Harriette.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 Eat whatever you like. You look like you could use a warm meal. It's on me.

Caroline says nothing.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)  
 I'll send Nurse Comstare by to  
 collect you. You can bunk with one  
 of her girls for the night. I'll  
 meet with you in the morning. You  
 can tell me where you're headed.

Tishbah bends behind himself and starts to untie the mule's  
 lead rope.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)  
 Meanwhile, you can get a good  
 night's sleep. If you accept.

CAROLINE  
 I accept.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 You accept?

CAROLINE  
 I accept.  
 (beat)  
 I may be broke and broken...

Upon Caroline's acquiescence, Tishbah hops off his horse and  
 finishes untying the mule.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
 ...but I'm not stupid.

Tishbah hands Caroline the mule's lead. She accepts it.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
 You're offering help. I need help.  
 I've been robbed of my last dollar  
 and I'm starving.  
 (beat)  
 I've been walking since before  
 dawn.

Tishbah digs into the pack tied onto his horse and pulls out  
 a canteen. He tries to give it to Caroline. She hesitates.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 It's water.

Caroline takes the canteen by the straps, uncaps it, sniffs  
 it, recaps it, and puts it over the mule's neck for later.

Tishbah considers what's left of the broken trunk.

CAROLINE  
It contained all of my worldly  
possessions.

Tishbah gathers up the broken trunk. Caroline watches in silence as he lifts the trunk onto the back of the pack mule. Tishbah constructs an elaborate knot pattern to fasten the trunk securely to the mule.

It's the first peace Caroline has felt in a long time.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
My mother died a month ago.

Tishbah looks from the knotting and directly at Caroline. She turns away, but his grandfatherly look is not lost on her.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
She was the only family I had.

Tishbah remains tranquil and silent. Caroline doesn't know how to respond to this mature compassion emanating from Tishbah.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
There's nothing left back--

Tishbah nods in understanding and raises his hand. Caroline understands too -- she need not continue. Peace. More silence.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
(softly)  
Too soon. Too soon.

Tishbah tugs one last time on the knots holding the trunk in place. He is back on his horse and starts to ride off towards school. He turns back to address her.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)  
I'll run ahead and let them know  
you're on the way. See you in the  
morning... um, what was... did  
you... did I get your name?

CAROLINE  
You did not.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
What was that?

He's still looking behind him at her, while the horse speeds away.

CAROLINE  
 No, you didn't.  
 (beat)  
 Mr. Tishbah?

Not sure if he's out of earshot or not, Caroline forms a megaphone by cupping her hands.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
 Thank you!

Tishbah and his horse are gone.

Caroline looks at the mule.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
 Hi Mule. I'm Caroline.

The mule stares blankly. From behind the mule, however, a surprise steps into Caroline's view.

Just as the mule had been earlier tied behind Tishbah's horse with a lead rope, now tied behind the mule with it's own lead rope is...

Caroline's muddy pig friend.

Whaaaat? It has to be the same pig with it's odd copper coloring. Didn't Caroline just see him earlier when the street robbers rode off? Wasn't he tied up and dead?

INT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Caroline stands in the doorway to Tishbah University's lunch room. She is about sixty feet away from the lunch line.

POV - CAROLINE

A white-haired older woman works alone behind the lunch line. She puts some lids on some containers. She moves slowly. She takes the containers and places them into an ice chest, then covers them with ice. She pauses. She wipes down surfaces.

BACK TO SCENE

Caroline walks deliberately to the lunch line. She approaches it at the end where the trays are stacked. Caroline is on a mission.

The white-haired, older woman, Harriette, doesn't look up.

Caroline clears her throat. She is not timid.

CAROLINE  
 Provost Tishbah sent me. He said I  
 could have some dinner, on the  
 house.

Harriette still doesn't look up.

HARRIETTE  
 You'll get what I give you.  
 Nothing more.

Harriette scoops some slop onto a tray.

CAROLINE  
 Has Provost Tishbah come by here  
 today? He said--

HARRIETTE  
 He's come by here. He's gone.

Harriette abruptly pushes the filled tray towards Caroline.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)  
 Hopefully, you'll be gone soon too.  
 I'm trying to close up.

Caroline straightens her back.

CAROLINE  
 Are you Harriette Bezzenny?

Harriette looks down at her "Harriette" name patch, decides  
 not to mention it.

HARRIETTE  
 Tishbah just said I had to feed  
 you. Didn't say I had to be  
 conversant.

CAROLINE  
 I'm Caroline Hampt... Caroline.  
 (beat)  
 Your daughter.

Now Harriette looks up.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
 The daughter you left for--

HARRIETTE  
 Impossible. My daughter is--

CAROLINE  
 --dead.



Harriette grabs the tray back from Caroline.

HARRIETTE

Get out!

Harriette dumps everything from the tray into a large paper sack. All of it.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)

Get out! Whoever you are, get out!

Harriette throws two pieces of bread into the bag.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)

Tishbah just said to feed you...

Harriette punctuates each word by throwing another chunk of bread into the bag.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)

(louder)

There. You. Are. Fed.

Harriette shoves the bag across the food line at Caroline.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)

(screaming)

Get out!

Caroline doesn't budge.

CAROLINE

I just wanted to meet you in case  
it was true.

HARRIETTE

It's not true.

Nurse Con Con rolls in through the lunch room doorway. Harriette doesn't notice her. Caroline, whose back is to the door, doesn't notice either.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)

(top of her lungs)

GET OUT!

Con Con rolls up closer to the lunch line.

CON CON

Harriette! What's going on here?

HARRIETTE

(to Con Con)

Take this lunatic out of my  
lunchroom! Now!

(beat)

And Nurse Comstare... I don't ever  
want to see this nutter anywhere  
near my lunch room ever again!

Con Con looks to Caroline, then back to Harriette. Con Con  
deliberates. Briefly. She turns to Caroline.

CON CON

I don't know what you've done to  
Harriette, but you better follow  
me.

Con Con wheels around towards the door, and Caroline follows.  
Caroline stops for a moment, though. She turns around and  
grabs the dripping paper sack, then continues towards the  
door to follow Con Con.

From the doorway where just moments ago she spied Harriette  
for the first time, Caroline turns around slowly for one last  
glance. Harriette has her back to her.

EXT. FRONT OF TISHBAH UNIVERSITY'S CAFETERIA - EVENING

The mule is gone. The trunk is still there. Caroline sits  
down on the busted trunk, warily, but it holds her. Con Con  
rolls into place off to Caroline's side.

Caroline lifts the dripping paper sack from her side to place  
it in her lap. The bottom tears out and all the slop spills  
out onto her dress, forming a giant food puddle in her lap.  
She takes a chunk of bread and dips it into the puddle.

CAROLINE

Sorry. I haven't eaten since  
yesterday.

Con Con extends her hand.

CON CON

Hi, I'm Nurse Comstare. Everyone  
calls me Con Con.

Caroline stares blankly.

CON CON (CONT'D)

And you arrrrre?

Caroline downs her third slice of bread. She is still staring off into space, not making eye contact.

CAROLINE  
Starving. I just said that.

CON CON  
Look. Provost Tishbah sent me to retrieve you, and put you up for the night.

CAROLINE  
Yes. I really do appreciate that. Tell him I said "Thank you," will you?

CON CON  
You can tell him yourself. You have your meeting with him at Eight A.M.

Caroline continues eating, and staring off into a void.

CON CON (CONT'D)  
Since you seem to be so forthcoming with details, would you mind telling me why Harriette was screaming at you?

Caroline looks Con Con straight in the eye.

CAROLINE  
I told her she is my mother.  
(beat)  
Or might be.

Con Con's face registers surprise, disbelief, shock. She then stares into the void herself.

CON CON  
I was there the night Harriette's daughter died.

CAROLINE  
I died?

Con Con's face registers sadness, uncertainty, hesitation.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
I mean... if I am her daughter.

CON CON  
You just said--

CAROLINE  
I know what I said. I just don't  
know what I know.

CON CON  
There's no way this conversation is  
not going to get confusing.

Con Con pauses. She has never seen someone put away so much food in so little time. Caroline is more focused on the food than on having this conversation.

Con Con extends her hand to Caroline.

CON CON (CONT'D)  
Let's start again.  
(beat)  
I'm Head Nurse Connie Comstock.  
Everybody calls me 'Con Con.' I  
run the Nursing School here at  
Tishbah University.

Caroline sets her current piece of bread into what's left of the food puddle in her lap. She slaps her hands together to smack off any crumbs.

Caroline's countenance melts from insolence to reverence.

CAROLINE  
(earnestly)  
Head Nurse? I had no idea.  
Challenging. I didn't know.  
(beat)  
I'm so sorry.

CON CON  
Sorry?

CAROLINE  
Sorry. I didn't know. I must have  
seemed so rude. I'm not a rude  
person.

CON CON  
Exactly what kind of person are  
you, Miss... Miss...

Caroline stares blankly. She takes another bite of lap bread. Con Con fends off annoyance and extends her hand.

CON CON (CONT'D)  
 Let's start again. Again.  
 (beat)  
 I'm Head Nurse Connie Comstock.  
 Everybody calls me 'Con Con.'

Caroline fidgets, but then softens further. She takes Con Con's extended hand and shakes it.

CAROLINE  
 Just call me 'Caroline.'

CON CON  
 Very well then... Caroline. You  
 don't have a last name?

Caroline resumes eating.

CAROLINE  
 Oh, I do. Or I did. I just don't  
 know anymore.

Con Con appears puzzled. Rightly so.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
 My last name is Hampton...

Confused, Con Con's face reveals she knows that name.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
 Or was.

CON CON  
 You said Harriette Bezzenny was  
 your mother.

CAROLINE  
 I said Harriette Bezzenny is my  
 mother. My mother was Sally  
 Hampton.

Con Con gasps.

CON CON  
 How do you know Sally Hampton?

CAROLINE  
 You knew Sally Hampton?

CON CON  
 Sally Hampton was the Head Nurse  
 here forty years ago.

CAROLINE

I know.

CON CON

She disappeared forty years ago  
too.

CAROLINE

Disappeared?

CON CON

If you really know Sally Hampton,  
you'd know she disappeared.

CAROLINE

I really knew her... My entire  
life. I just told you. She is my  
mother. Or was.

(sotto)

Until she passed away.

Nurse Con Con gasps.

CON CON

Sally Hampton is dead?

INT. WHITE EMPTY ROOM - NIGHT

Pepper Priestly, Hattie Hires, Marlette Michigan, Tillie  
Toyt, and Bellabeulah stand in a semi-circle in a stark white  
room. White ceiling, white floors, white walls. There is a  
white wooden door in the back of this white space.

At the front of this stark white space is a glass door which  
opens to the street, and a floor-to-ceiling plate glass  
window looking out onto the street. This must have been a  
store front at some point.

The girls are not looking out the large plate glass window.  
They are staring at the wall. On this wall is the only thing  
in this entire white space. A small unframed canvas 11" x  
14" painting. Of a woman.

Pepper Priestly lights a match.

The woman in the painting kind of looks like Caroline.

BELLABEULAH

Who is she?

TILLIE

Is she dead?

EXT. FRONT OF TISHBAH UNIVERSITY'S CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Con Con pulls a lantern from the pack behind her chair. She lights a match, and then lights a lantern.

CON CON

I don't know who you are. I don't know what to believe. The only thing I do know is no good can come from you being here.

CAROLINE

I was invited.

CON CON

After you were already headed here.

CAROLINE

I was invited.

CON CON

Yeah. We better get you over to your bunk. Looks like it's been a while since you've had a good night's sleep.

Caroline slunks down, like someone let the air out of her.

CAROLINE

The meeting.

CON CON

What are you going to tell him you want?

Caroline looks puzzled.

CON CON (CONT'D)

Tishbah. He gives people what they want. What're you going to tell him you want? What are you doing here?

INT. WHITE EMPTY ROOM - NIGHT

Carl Trudnich walks by the large plate glass window. Due to the match light, he sees the girls. His eyes widen and he darts through the glass door into the stark white room.

He startles the GIRLS, who SCREAM!

TRUDNICH

What are you doing here?!?!?

PEPPER

The door was open. We just came in. We weren't doing anything wrong.

The girls murmur in agreement.

TRUDNICH

Quiet. I've done enough listening for tonight. You can tell Nurse Con Con in the morning what you all were doing in here.

EXT. TRAIL OUTSIDE THE GIRL'S DORMITORY - NIGHT

Con Con and her lamp lead the way in her chair, as she and Caroline head up the trail to the dorm. Caroline is still dragging the battered trunk.

CON CON

I think I've done enough listening for tonight. You can tell Tishbah in the morning your 'Tale of the Multiple Mothers.'

Caroline says nothing.

CON CON (CONT'D)

If Sally Hampton is really dead, and she really is your mom, you're going to have to decide what you want. You're probably going to need to go home.

INT. WHITE EMPTY ROOM - NIGHT

Carl Trudnich, arms crossed, scolds the girls. He is standing in front of the painting because he wanted all of their attention and that is the direction they were facing.

TRUDNICH

You're definitely going to need to go home. Now!

The girls scramble out the door.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE GIRL'S DORMITORY - NIGHT

Con Con and Caroline have reached the dormitory.



CON CON

I'll say it again. If Sally was your mom, you need to decide what you want.

CAROLINE

I can't have what I want. I want my mom back.

CON CON

And what if Harriette IS your real mom?

CAROLINE

Then I want her to pay.

INT. WHITE EMPTY ROOM - NIGHT

Carl Trudnich, now alone, looks around in the dark. The painting is still behind him.

TRUDNICH

(to himself)

Why were those girls even in here?

He scratches his head, and turns to walk towards the door. He throws his hands up in the air in frustration.

TRUDNICH (CONT'D)

I give up!

As he throws his hands up in an exaggerated fashion, his left hand grazes the wall and knocks the painting to the floor.

TRUDNICH (CONT'D)

What is this?

He picks the painting up and looks at it, seeing it for the first time. He is mesmerized, gobsmacked.

HARP MUSIC CRESCENDOES and fills the small space. Trudnich stares in wonder at the painting.

The MUSIC CRESCENDOES even LOUDER. Trudnich appears to be hypnotized.

The MUSIC GETS LOUDER AND LOUDER to the point it becomes distorted. Trudnich appears to be in a trance.

The DISTORTED BUZZING GROWS LOUDER AND LOUDER. The room spins.

The spinning spins faster and BUZZING BUZZES LOUDER. This distorted frenzy lasts an uncomfortably long amount of time. All of a sudden...

MOS

Trudnich kisses the painting. On the lips.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY LUNCH ROOM - MORNING

Provost Tishbah is in line. He approaches Harriette.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
Good morning, Harriette.

HARRIETTE  
Hmmpmph.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
Big breakfast before a big meeting,  
Harriette.

HARRIETTE  
Hmmpmph.

Harriette passes a tray over to Provost Tishbah with bacon, two eggs sunny-side up, toast, two pancakes, and a mound of scrapple.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
Looks great. Got any Overnight  
Oats back there?

HARRIETTE  
It's first thing in the morning.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
Yes, it is. No better time for your  
Overnight Oats than first thing in  
the morning. Those things are good  
enough to raise the dead!

HARRIETTE  
If you want Overnight Oats, you  
have to order them the night  
before.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
I've never--

HARRIETTE  
 Why else would I call them  
 'Overnight Oats?' You gotta order  
 them the night before.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 I've had them in the past and I  
 never--

HARRIETTE  
 Not from me you haven't. Overnight  
 Oats take overnight.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 You nev--

HARRIETTE  
 Must've been on my day off or  
 something. Overnight Oats take  
 overnight.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 But they nev--

HARRIETTE  
 Whatever they gave you, it wasn't  
 Overnight Oats.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 You mean I--

HARRIETTE  
 I mean you might've eaten oats, but  
 they weren't overnight.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 What exactly makes them  
 'Overnight,' Harriette?

HARRIETTE  
 I just told you. You order them  
 the night before.

Carl Trudnich enters and gets in line behind Tishbah.

TRUDNICH  
 Order what the night before? The  
 Overnight Oats? Yes. You do have  
 mine back there, don't you?

Tishbah watches as Harriette slides a tray of Overnight Oats  
 across to Trudnich.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
Never mind.

Tishbah slides his tray back to Harriette.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)  
Just double up on the scrapple.  
Big meetings give me a big  
appetite.

Trudnich's ears perk up at the mentions of a big meeting.

TRUDNICH  
Big meeting. Without me?

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
It doesn't concern you, Carl. At  
least not that I know of. It's  
about a woman I--

Harriette panics. She drops the entire steel bin of scrapple on the floor with a loud CRASH. Was that intentional?

Tishbah looks over the counter.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)  
You okay, Harriette?

Harriette looks up from the floor, where she has fallen to her knees, and is beginning to clean up the mess. She silently gestures to Tishbah from down there, out of sight from Trudnich, with her index finger to her mouth. Shhhhh.

Tishbah looks confused. He turns to Trudnich.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)  
As I was saying, I'm meeting with a  
woman I saw yesterday who--

CRASH. Harriette reaches up and pulls down another steel tray of food off the counter. This time it is turnips, and is definitely intentional.

TRUDNICH  
Not the turnips!

While Trudnich panics about the turnips, again Harriette gestures to Tishbah to shush -- while trying to remain out of the view of Trudnich. Tishbah gets it this time, although his face registers puzzlement as to why.

TRUDNICH (CONT'D)

I hope you were able to save some of those turnips from hitting the floor.

Trudnich turns to Tishbah.

TRUDNICH (CONT'D)

I saw a woman yesterday too...

Now Harriette's ears perk up.

TRUDNICH (CONT'D)

...well, last night...

Harriette rises above the counter. Interest piqued.

TRUDNICH (CONT'D)

...well, a painting of a woman...

Relieved, Harriette goes back to cleaning up the mess. She remains within earshot, but Trudnich is ignoring her as he continues to tell his story to Tishbah.

TRUDNICH (CONT'D)

... You know that empty white store front down on Downonmain? A couple blocks from campus? I caught Con Con's girls in there last nigh--

ELIJAH TISHBAH

They were just hanging out in an empty storefront? What time was that?

TRUDNICH

Who cares? This isn't about that. You can talk to them later, I--

ELIJAH TISHBAH

I will.

TRUDNICH

Good. Fine. Will you stop interrupting? This painting. This woman. She got ahold of me. She was the most--

INT. NURSE CON CON'S OFFICE - DAY

Nurse Con Con is behind her desk in her wheelchair. She looks concerned. Pepper, Marlette, Tillie, Hattie, and Bellabeulah are seated atop various pieces of furniture in the office. They've made themselves at home.

PEPPER

--the most beautiful woman you've ever seen.

TILLIE

The most beautiful dead woman you've ever seen.

INT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Trudnich continues describing the painting to Tishbah. Harriette is now back up behind the counter. She slides Trudnich his turnips.

TRUDNICH

I was mesmerized.

Is Harriette starting to look worried?

TRUDNICH (CONT'D)

I know I've never seen any one like her. If I had, I'd remember it. She was beyond breathtaking.

Harriette definitely looks worried. Tishbah waves his right hand in front of Trudnich's face.

ELIJAH TISHBAH

Who are you and what have you done with the real Trudnich?

(beat)

What did this woman look like?

Trudnich becomes hyper-animated.

TRUDNICH

This isn't about looks! You'll never understand!

Trudnich turns to Harriette.

TRUDNICH (CONT'D)

And neither will you!

Trudnich turns back to Tishbah.

TRUDNICH (CONT'D)

Oddly enough, I have no idea what she looks like. I couldn't look away, and yet I never saw her really. She saw me!

INT. NURSE CON CON'S OFFICE - DAY

Nurse Con Con, in her wheelchair, listens to Pepper, Marlette, Tillie, Hattie, and Bellabeulah as they continue to describe what happened last night.

BELLABEULAH

I can't describe her, Nurse Con Con. And I looked right at her.

HATTIE

Same here. Couldn't look away, but couldn't tell you what she looked like if my life depended on it.

Pepper and Marlette shake their heads in agreement.

TILLIE

She looked dead.

CON CON

Enough. It's a painting. What's the big deal? The real big deal is your breaking and entering--

PEPPER

Just entering. It was open.

CON CON

Be that as it may. You had to get caught by Trudnich of all people! You know Trudnich will go straight to Tishbah this morning, right?

The gang all bow their heads remorsefully.

CON CON (CONT'D)

Shoot. Tishbah this morning! The meeting! I've gotta go, girls!

Con Con swings herself around in her wheelchair and rolls towards the door.

CON CON (CONT'D)

Pepper you're in charge. You and Hattie collect the trash and take it out back.

Nurse Con Con points to a three foot tall stack of files on her desk.

CON CON (CONT'D)

Bellabeulah, you and Marlette file this stack of files by student in the file cabinet.

(beat)

Tillie, you... you... I don't know.

(beat)

Pepper, give Tillie something to do.

PEPPER

Yes, ma'am.

CON CON

I'll be back in an hour, hour and a half.

Nurse Con Con wheels out the door.

PEPPER

You heard the woman. She'll be back before you know it. Let's get to work.

Before Con Con clears the threshold, Bellabeulah and Marlette begin tackling the filing pile.

PEPPER (CONT'D)

Tillie, you're with me now. Start collecting the trash.

Pepper scuffs at the floor with the toe of her shoe.

PEPPER (CONT'D)

Hattie, see if there's a mop around here somewhere. Maybe in that closet over there.

Pepper points to the closed door, which is the second furthest from where they are standing.

There are four doors in Nurse Con Con's rectangular office: The one in the front long wall, through which Con Con just left; the one opposite the front door, directly behind the girls on the long back wall; the one to their left, in the short wall where Pepper is pointing; and, the one to their right in the other short wall.

There are no windows.



Pepper again scuffs at the floor with the toe of her shoe.

PEPPER (CONT'D)  
 If Nurse Con Con is trying to  
 punish us with these cleaning  
 chores, she should've told one of  
 us to mop up these brown stains.

Pepper toes at the floor some more.

PEPPER (CONT'D)  
 What is this stuff? It's sticky.

Tillie has more trash bags in her arms than she can handle.  
 She drops one, picks it up, only to drop another.

TILLIE  
 Wonder where she takes out the  
 trash?

Bellabeulah looks up from filing.

BELLABEULAH  
 Looks like she doesn't.

Hattie is standing in front of the right side door she has  
 opened.

HATTIE  
 Um, Pepper?

PEPPER  
 You find that mop?

HATTIE  
 Noooooo...

PEPPER  
 Well, keep looking. We've got to--

HATTIE  
 Pepper, you better come look at  
 this.

Pepper and Hattie stand in the wide open doorway on the right  
 side of the office. Inside that doorway is a very large  
 closet. Inside that closet is a very large... metal  
 contraption? Is that a copper pot-bellied still?

PEPPER  
 Is that a copper pot-bellied still?

INT. PROVOST TISHBAH'S OFFICE - DAY

Provost Tishbah sits behind his well-appointed desk. Caroline sits across from him. Next to Caroline, on the floor sits her pig friend.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
Is that a copper pot-bellied pig?

CAROLINE  
Aren't all pigs pot-bellied?

Caroline is fidgety. Not nervous fidgety, but in-a-hurry-to-get-out-of-here fidgety.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
Did you get a chance to talk to  
Head Nurse Comstare?

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
Con Con? No, not directly. She  
found you a place to bunk for the  
night, I hear.

CAROLINE  
Yes, it was fine. Nice, in fact.  
(beat)  
She didn't tell you what happened  
yesterday?

Tishbah shakes his head indicating the negative.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
We had a slight problem in the  
lunchroom yesterday.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
What type of problem?

INT. NURSE CON CON'S OFFICE - DAY

Pepper and Hattie are staring at the copper pot still. Bellabeulah and Marlette continue filing. Tillie opens the door in the back of Con Con's office.

TILLIE  
Um, Pepper?

PEPPER  
You find the trash bin?

TILLIE  
Noooooo...

PEPPER  
Well keep looking. We've got to--

TILLIE  
We kind of have a slight problem.

PEPPER  
What type of problem?

PROVOST TISHBAH'S OFFICE

CAROLINE  
It's about Harriette.

NURSE CON CON'S OFFICE

TILLIE  
Pepper, you better come look at  
this.

Pepper joins Tillie in front of the opened back door. They stare inside.

Inside the back door is a large closet. This large closet is full. From top to bottom, stacked on their sides... Are those soda pop bottles?

TILLIE (CONT'D)  
What are all these... glass--

PEPPER  
--bottles? Tillie, these are so--

Hattie walks over and joins Tillie and Marlette.

HATTIE  
--soda pop bottles.

Pepper looks quizzically at Hattie. From across the room...

BELLABEULAH	MARLETTE
What are soda pop bottles?	What are soda pop bottles?

Back over by the back door, Pepper and Hattie are facing off. Pepper appears to be sizing up Hattie.

PEPPER  
How do you know what--

HATTIE  
--what soda pop bottles are?  
(beat)  
The better question is...

Both Pepper and Hattie slowly turn away from each other and stare back into the closet.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
 ...where did Nurse Con Con get all  
 of these bottles?

PROVOST TISHBAH'S OFFICE

Tishbah appears concerned, but for some reason not surprised.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 You told her what?

CAROLINE  
 I told her she was my mother.

INT. WHITE EMPTY ROOM - DAY

ARI (58, full head of flowing white hair, neatly trimmed white beard, dapper in a white suit and tie) is unpacking a box of white frames containing typed sayings onto a white shelving unit.

This is the same white room we saw last night, but it is no longer empty. Now, white shelving units line every wall except where there are doors and windows. And of course, there is no white shelf placed in front of the small painting of the mysterious dead woman.

The shelf Ari is stocking is immediately to the right of that painting. Ari talks to the woman in the painting as he works.

ARI  
 People are always searching for the  
 truth, so why not open a store and  
 give the people what they want?

Ari adjusts a couple of the white-framed sayings to face the front of the shelving unit.

ARI (CONT'D)  
 And who better to give the people  
 what they want than the Head of the  
 Philosophy Department at Tishbah  
 University?

Ari pulls out another white-framed saying, and reads it aloud, as he places it on the shelf.

ARI (CONT'D)  
 The truth shall make you free.

He turns to address the painting.

ARI (CONT'D)  
I suppose it's a little too late  
for you; it's true nevertheless.

He pulls another white-framed saying out of the box, and again reads it as he places it on the shelf.

ARI (CONT'D)  
The truth doesn't care who believes  
it.

He again turns to the painting.

ARI (CONT'D)  
Ain't that the truth?

He smiles at his own cleverness, then fishes through the box.

ARI (CONT'D)  
One last one, beautiful woman in  
the painting.

He holds the final white-framed sentence at arm's length as he prepares to read it.

ARI (CONT'D)  
Speak every...

Pithy walks in. Ari nods toward her, acknowledging her presence. He continues.

ARI (CONT'D)  
Speak every man truth with his  
neighbor, for we are members one of  
anoth--

Pithy walks right by him, well within his personal space. As she passes his face, she slows, her lips just an inch away from his lips, but doesn't stop.

PITHY  
Buy the truth, and sell it not.

She smiles and walks over to a shelf that is already full. She pretends to shop. Her back is to Ari, but she keeps flinging her hair as she turns her head to make eye-contact with him.

ARI  
Then you've walked into the wrong  
shop, Miss... Miss...

PITHY  
 'Mistruths have legs.' Put that on  
 one of these signs.

Ari eyes her up and down.

ARI  
 Pithy.

She turns around and outstretches her right hand to shake.

PITHY  
 Yes, I am.

Ari smirks.

ARI  
 Beg your pardon?

Pithy's hand is still outstretched.

PITHY  
 Pithy Stottle. Glad to make your  
 acquaintance.

Ari takes her right hand in his and firmly grasps it. Before she can release, he adds his left hand to the shake, placing it gently atop hers. He intensifies his eye contact. He does not let go.

ARI  
 Great last name. Full of promise.

Pithy realizes Ari has no intention of letting go of her hand anytime soon. Her smile widens. She places her left hand atop of his momentarily, then she runs her index finger teasingly down his ring finger.

PITHY  
 Great fingers. Likewise.  
 (beat)  
 No ring? No wi--

ARI  
 Let's just say I'm allergic to  
 gold.

She breaks away from the handshake, raises her left hand, wiggles the backs of her fingers at him, flouting her giant wedding ring.

PITHY  
 Let's just say I'm not.

ARI

Let's just say I don't ca--

He closes his eyes and leans in to kiss her. Pithy playfully and abruptly walks over to the painting.

PITHY

Is this your wife?

ARI

I wish.

PITHY

I'm sure that could be arranged...

Pithy grabs him by the lapel, swings him around, and slams him against the wall. His head is to the immediate right of the painting, between the painting and the shelf he was stocking earlier.

PITHY (CONT'D)

...when I'm done with you.

She presses her body close against him. She presses her lips against his. They kiss passionately.

Eventually the kisses slow, then linger a bit, then separate.

Ari composes himself. He smooths his hair back with his hands, straightens his tie -- then kind of adjusts his hips a little bit.

ARI

Speaking of things that could be arranged...

Pithy arches one eyebrow. Ari pulls a large six foot sign out from behind a shelving unit. We see just the back of it.

ARI (CONT'D)

Maybe now you can role play you're a sign hanger, dear; Let's get this up before we go home to dinner.

Pithy lovingly pecks him on the cheek.

PITHY

Anything for my faithful husband.

They turn to walk towards the glass front door. Ari is still carrying the sign with only its back visible.

PITHY (CONT'D)  
 What would you like for dinner  
 tonight, Dr. Stottle?

WIPE TO:

EXT. STOREFRONT - DAY

Ari, atop a ladder, has the sign held up against the storefront. He tries to get it level. Pithy is on the sidewalk directing him.

PITHY  
 A little higher on the right.  
 (beat)  
 Perfect.

The sign reads: THE HARD TRUTH

ARI  
 The truth shall be established  
 forever.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. PROVOST TISHBAH'S OFFICE - DAY

Provost Tishbah smiles as he gathers a stack of papers up from his desk and then tamps them vertically on their bottom edges to straighten them out.

Caroline sits across the desk from Provost Tishbah. Her smile is genuine.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 ...And the truth shall be  
 established forever.  
 (beat)  
 That was quite the story, Caroline.  
 (beat)  
 You've had a tough couple of weeks.

CAROLINE  
 I can't complain really. I've  
 lived a charmed life until the last  
 month or so.



ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 Sounds like it. That Sally --  
 excuse me -- that Head Nurse  
 Hampton always was a remarkable  
 woman.

CAROLINE  
 Thank you, Provost Tishbah, I'm  
 sure she'd be pleased to hear you  
 say that.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 (thinking)  
 Yes.

CAROLINE  
 And I know she'd be pleased to hear  
 that you've given me a job.

Tishbah gets up from behind the desk, walks around to the  
 front of it, and towards the door.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 (thinking)  
 Yes.

CAROLINE  
 I know I'm pleased that's for sure.  
 We've already done all the  
 paperwork. Do you think I could  
 start this afternoon?

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 Why don't you finish settling in?  
 I need to tell Nurse Con Con that  
 you'll be staying. You can start  
 in a day or so.

CAROLINE  
 I really don't mind starting today.

On his way towards the door, Tishbah stops to tossle the  
 pig's hair, so to speak -- like petting a dog's head.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 Too soon, too soon.

EXT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Tillie, Marlette, and Bellabeulah are sitting on the hitching  
 post outside the front door of the lunch room.

BELLABEULAH

The nerve of that Pepper Priestly!  
Shooing us out of Nurse Con Con's  
office like we were my granny's  
chickens.

MARLETTE

Y-y-you can't take it p-p-  
personally. Those two are like  
that. They're just watching out  
for us.

TILLIE

So we don't wind up dead.

All three girls hop down from the hitching post.

MARLETTE

W-w-we better head back to the  
dorm.

They start walking away from the lunch room building towards  
the trail to the dorm.

MARLETTE (CONT'D)

We shouldn't stay out too long  
without the other girls, without  
Pepper and Hattie.

BELLABEULAH

They're the ones who threw us out!

MARLETTE

N-n-nevertheless, let's keep  
walking. I'm s-s-sure they have  
their reasons.

As the girls walk up the trail, they see Caroline coming down  
the trail with her pet pig. Bellabeulah is excited.  
Marlette is, well, Marlette.

They get to the point where they cross paths.

BELLABEULAH

That's a fine pig you have there,  
ma'am.

Bellabeulah fixes her gaze on Caroline.

BELLABEULAH (CONT'D)

What's a city girl like you doing  
with a fine pig like this?



BELLABEULAH

TILLIE!

O.S. A HORSE WHINNIES in the distance.

MARLETTE and BELLABEULAH SCREAM all the way. They are almost back down to the bottom of the hill.

MARLETTE

TILLIE!

BELLABEULAH

TILLIE!

O.S. A HORSE WHINNIES LOUDER. No longer in the distance.

Marlette and Bellabeulah arrive back at the hitching post. They are out of breath.

Tillie is there standing behind the hitching post.

Frozen.

Her mouth wide open.

Staring.

Straight ahead.

On the other side of the hitching post, a horse is tied.

A white horse with the facial markings of a Holstein cow -- with a black bullseye marking around the left eye.

MARLETTE

AAAAaaaaaugh!!!

BELLABEULAH

AAAAaaaaaugh!!!

Tillie the human breaks her silence.

TILLIE

AAAAaaaaaugh!!!

Tillie the horse joins in.

TILLIE THE HORSE

AAAAaaaaaugh!!!

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. THE HARD TRUTH - EVENING

Ari is behind the counter, buried in invoices and paperwork. Behind Ari is the large floor-to-ceiling glass window that looks out into the street. Occasional shoppers wander by.

There's a cowbell on the front door now to alert Ari when someone comes in. The COWBELL CLANGS. Carl Trudnich walks in.

Ari doesn't look up.

ARI

Getting ready to close in five minutes. Wife has dinner waiting.

Trudnich doesn't look up at Ari. He makes a beeline to the painting. Trudnich stares at the painting.

Ari looks up. Disappointment registers on his face when he sees it is Trudnich. Nevertheless...

ARI (CONT'D)

(to himself)

A sale is a sale.

(to Trudnich)

So, Trudnich... you in the market for some truth?

Trudnich doesn't look away from the painting. He continues to stare for an awkwardly long time.

ARI (CONT'D)

Trudnich. Wife. Dinner. Waiting.

Trudnich, as if in a trance, is mesmerized.

TRUDNICH

Who is she?

ARI

My wife? You know Pithy.

TRUDNICH

Not her.

He finally looks up at Ari. Then he looks back at the painting.

TRUDNICH (CONT'D)

Her.

The COWBELL CLANGS. Provost Tishbah walks in. Ari looks up and smiles. Tishbah smiles. He sees Trudnich and disappointment crosses his face. He makes the best of it.

ELIJAH TISHBAH

Ari! Glad you hadn't left yet. I'm  
in the need of some truth.

ARI

Aren't we all, Provost Tishbah.  
Aren't we all.

Tishbah glances over at a fully-stocked shelf. He looks over several different sayings, then he picks up one of the white-framed truth sayings: When You Think It's Too Late, The Truth Is It's Too Early.

Tishbah takes that saying frame to the counter.

ELIJAH TISHBAH

Perfect.

ARI

Yes.

Ari sizes up Tishbah.

ARI (CONT'D)

My first sale. How's two dollars  
sound?

ELIJAH TISHBAH

Sounds more than fair.

Tishbah bends over and whispers to Ari. Tishbah glances back at Trudnich.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)

(sotto)

What's wrong with him?

ARI

He's Trudnich.

They both laugh.

ELIJAH TISHBAH

Besides that.

ARI

I'm not sure. I think he's in love  
with that painting.

Now curious, Tishbah walks up behind Trudnich. Tishbah looks over Trudnich's shoulder at the painting. If Tishbah is surprised that it looks like Caroline today, his face doesn't register it.

Tishbah calmly reaches over Trudnich's shoulder. Trudnich is startled.

TRUDNICH  
What are you doing?

Tishbah doesn't answer.

TRUDNICH (CONT'D)  
Don't touch it!

Not only does Tishbah touch it, he gently removes it. Trudnich is aghast.

TRUDNICH (CONT'D)  
Put it back! Put it back!

Tishbah looks at the back of the painting. We see some signature-like scribbles and the year "1859" painted on the back.

TRUDNICH (CONT'D)  
Put it back before you drop her!

Tishbah gently puts it back, before he drops it. Before walking away, he straightens it.

With the painting safely back on the wall, Trudnich instantly calms down.

TRUDNICH (CONT'D)  
I guess I should be going.

Trudnich takes one last longingly loving look at the painting as he reaches for the exit door.

TRUDNICH (CONT'D)  
What time do you open in the morning, Ari?

ARI  
Ten.

TRUDNICH  
See you then.

As Trudnich exits, Tishbah walks over to the counter. Tishbah hands Ari his purchase.

Tishbah looks around the store and takes it all in.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
You've done a great job with the place, Ari. Great job.

Tishbah looks up at the ceiling. He looks concerned.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)  
 Don't take this the wrong way, Ari.  
 I have a word for you.  
 (long beat)  
 Too soon, too soon. I wish you  
 well, but it just seems too soon.

Tishbah takes one last look around in silence.

The silence is interrupted with a loud TAP, TAP, TAP on the large front window.

Ari and Tishbah are startled. They both look to the window.

It's Caroline grinning ear to ear, waving frantically to one of the few people in town she recognizes and is happy to see: Provost Tishbah.

Tishbah glances over to Trudnich who is again mesmerized at the painting. Tishbah's eyes dart back-and-forth between the 1859 painting on the wall and the 1899 Caroline outside the window. Back-and-forth, back-and-forth until all is a blur.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)  
 Too soon, too soon.

ARI  
 Sorry?

Tishbah, lost in thought, snaps back to attention.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 No, no, no, I'm the one that's  
 sorry. My thoughts ran away with  
 me.  
 (beat)  
 I wish you well--

Caroline enters the store. She is excited to see Tishbah. Tishbah places himself between Caroline and the painting, to block her view.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)  
 --but it just all seems too soon.

Behind the 1899 cash register, Ari lets those words register.

CAROLINE  
 What's too soon?

She looks around, wide-eyed. She starts grabbing signs off the shelves and reading them and her eyes widen even wider.



As she grabs signs, Tishbah repositions himself, attempting to block Caroline's view of the painting. So far he is successful.

Caroline ignores all the motion, and reads one of the signs aloud.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
 'Let us not love in word or talk,  
 but rather in deed and in truth.'  
 Love it!

She puts that one back and grabs another.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
 'Love rejoices with the truth.'

She smiles, puts that one back, and grabs another. She's enamored with these signs.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
 (giggling)  
 'Truthful lips endure forever.' So  
 true! Get it? It's a sign about  
 truth, and it's true!

She's ridiculously amused by her own joke, and begins laughing uncontrollably.

Ari is as about as wide-eyed about Caroline's laughter, as she was about the signs. Tishbah notices.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 (to Caroline)  
 Yes, we get it. Caroline, this is  
 Ari. Besides being the proprietor  
 here, he heads our philosophy  
 department at the university.

Caroline extends her hand to Ari. Ari takes it to shake.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)  
 (eyes on Caroline)  
 You remember earlier in my office  
 when I mentioned Pithy Stottle?  
 (eyes on Ari)  
 You'll be working with Ari's wife,  
 Pithy Stottle, in your new  
 position.

Ari drops her hand.

ARI

Yes, my wife. Had you come by an hour earlier, you could have met. She was just here.

Ari looks over at the blank space where Trudnich was standing just moments ago.

ARI (CONT'D)

Of course, then you would have also had to meet Trud--

Tishbah interrupts Ari with a scowl.

ELIJAH TISHBAH

Caroline will be meeting everyone soon enough. I'm sure your wife, and Nurse Con Con, will show her around.

Tishbah tosses a five-dollar bill onto the counter. Ari pulls down the big crank on the side of the cash register to open the drawer.

Tishbah picks up his sign as he ushers Caroline to the door. He is again careful to position himself in such a way that he blocks Caroline's view of the painting.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)

You came by at the perfect time, Caroline. Let me walk you back to campus.

As Tishbah opens the door for Caroline...

CAROLINE

Nice meeting you, Professor Stottle.

Ari nods to Caroline. He then holds up the five-dollar bill to Tishbah.

ARI

Elijah! Don't you want your change for this five-dollar note?

Caroline is already out on the sidewalk. From inside the doorway...

ELIJAH TISHBAH

It's all yours, Ari.

Ari waves a Thank You. The door closes behind Tishbah.

Ari kisses the five-dollar bill exaggeratedly. He speaks directly to the Native American Chief pictured on the bill.

ARI

Onepapa, you're one papa that's welcome around here. Send some of your friends, won't you?

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF THE HARD TRUTH - NIGHT

Caroline and Tishbah walk down the sidewalk. The sign he purchased is under his arm.

CAROLINE

Ari seems nice.

ELIJAH TISHBAH

Nicely married. Best keep your distance from him, Caroline.

CAROLINE

Speaking of keeping a distance...

A look of realization crosses Caroline's face. She interrupts her thought.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Oh wait, I never even looked to see what sign you bought...

They stop walking long enough so that he can hold up the sign for her to read.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Anyway, as I was saying, speaking of keeping a distance...

(beat)

Why were you trying to stop me from seeing that painting?

INSERT - TISHBAH'S SIGN

Words in black Dovestype on the framed white board: "When You Think It's Too Late, The Truth Is It's Too Early."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GIRL'S DORM - SLEEPING QUARTERS - BEFORE DAWN

The layout of the sleeping quarters in the nursing school's girls dormitory building is a large square. Even though there are only five girls currently living there, there are eight beds.

CLOSE ON BELLABEULAH who sits bolt upright with a short startled SCREAM.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL four single twin beds stick out perpendicularly from the West wall. Similarly, across the room, four more beds stick out perpendicularly from the East wall. Two of the beds along the East wall, although still perpendicular to that wall, have been pushed together to make one larger bed.

The door to the outside greenspace commons area is on the South wall. The door to the new floating bathhouse, one of the first in the state, on the Lehigh River is on the North wall. The river is maybe only 300 hundred yards from the dorm.

Bellabeulah is in the second bed from the North along the West wall. Directly across from her, along the East wall, awakened by Bellabeulah's scream, now TILLIE bolts upright and SCREAMS an even longer louder scream.

Tillie's scream wakes up Marlette. She's on her side, hugging a pillow as if it is a person. She feels around the other side of the pillow, as if she's missing her person.

MARLETTE  
(groggy)  
Where's Hattie?

Marlette looks over to Bellabeulah's bed. Whew! At least she's not there.

MARLETTE (CONT'D)  
What's with all the screaming?

Marlette looks from Bellabeulah to Tillie.

MARLETTE (CONT'D)  
And where's Hattie?

Tillie points at Bellabeulah.

TILLIE  
I screamed because she screamed.

BELLABEULAH

I don't know why I screamed. I  
just woke up screaming.

(beat)

Hattie told you last night she and  
Pepper were going to the bathhouse  
this morning. The truth is you  
weren't listening to her.

Hattie rolls over and pulls the covers over her head.

HATTIE

The truth is it's too early.

INT. BATHHOUSE - DAWN

Pepper and Hattie are getting dressed. A ROOSTER CROWS.

PEPPER

Oh my gosh, is that the rooster?  
Is it dawn already?

HATTIE

The truth is it's too early.

PEPPER

I can't believe we talked that long  
about the bottles.

HATTIE

I can't believe there's someone  
else here in Bethlehem,  
Pennsylvania who even knows soda  
pop bottles exist.

PEPPER

What are the odds that two experts  
on the topic would wind up in the  
same town, outside of anywhere but  
New York, much less at the same  
university?

Caroline enters the bathhouse with a change of clothes and a  
towel over her arm. Her pig friend follows her in.

CAROLINE

Experts on what topic?

Caroline sticks out her hand to Pepper.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
 Caroline Ham... um, Caroline. I  
 start working with Pithy Stottle  
 today.

Pepper takes Caroline's hand and shakes it.

PEPPER  
 Pepper Priestly.

Hattie presents her hand to Caroline.

HATTIE  
 Hattie Hires. Bellabeulah mentioned  
 her and Marlette running into you  
 on the trail yesterday.

Caroline takes her hand and shakes it.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
 Well if truth be known, she talked  
 more about this handsome little  
 fella than she did you.

Hattie leans over and tossles the pig's "hair" atop his head.

PEPPER  
 No offense.

CAROLINE  
 None taken. He's a charmer  
 alright. Or more accurately, he's  
 lived a charmed life.  
 (under her breath)  
 Or two.

Pepper and Hattie exchange glances.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
 So... You two girls are experts,  
 eh? On what?

Pepper and Hattie exchange glances. Again.

PEPPER  
 We really shouldn't say.

HATTIE  
 Isn't that the truth? We really  
*shouldn't*.

PEPPER  
 Yes, the truth is, we *really*  
 shouldn't.

HATTIE

The truth is it's too early.

INT. NURSE CON CON'S OFFICE - DAY

Nurse Con Con sits behind her desk in her wheelchair. She reaches for a box underneath her desk. She talks to herself in third person.

CON CON

Oh, Connie Comstock, should we? We really shouldn't.

She pushes the box further back under the desk.

CON CON (CONT'D)

But isn't it true, we only live once?

She reaches for the box again.

CON CON (CONT'D)

Tell that to Caroline! Ha!

She again pushes the box further back under the desk.

CON CON (CONT'D)

Why is this so hard? We really really shouldn't.

She reaches down again -- this time inside the box. She pulls out a bottle of soda pop. She drinks the entire bottle at once.

She examines the empty glass bottle.

CON CON (CONT'D)

The truth is it's way too early.

INT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Harriette, alone, is behind the counter preparing the aluminum trays of food for this morning's breakfast service. Her back is to the food line.

Trudnich comes in, grabs a melamine lunch tray, and slams it louder than he intended on the food line.

Startled, Harriette swings around and spots Trudnich.

HARRIETTE

You know better than this. We're not open yet. Come back in an hour.

TRUDNICH

And you know better than I do, I ordered Overnight Oats. Last night. So they are already back there somewhere.

HARRIETTE

Come back in an hour. Overnight Oats are not officially done until we open the next morning.

(beat)

Which is in an hour.

TRUDNICH

The truth is, I have somewhere important to be. I can't come back in an hour. I need some Overnight Oats now.

Harriette turns her back to him.

HARRIETTE

The truth is it's too early.

Trudnich reaches over the glass partition and grabs a handful of hotcakes and stuffs them in his suitcoat pocket. He grabs one more and stuffs it in his mouth and storms out.

INT. PITHY STOTTLE'S OFFICE - DAY

Pithy is tidying up her office. To the right of her desk is a smaller secretary's desk. She pulls the top drawer open, looks in it, and closes it.

She turns and addresses the biology skeleton standing against the wall.

PITHY

The new girl is going to need some pencils, Slim.

Pithy walks over to a bookshelf lined with Mason quart jars filled with pencils. At the end of the line of quart jars, is a 2-gallon pickle jar filled with water, and a goldfish.

A dead goldfish.



Pithy grabs one of the Mason jars filled with pencils, and spots the dead fish.

PITHY (CONT'D)  
Oh nooooo...

From behind her...

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
(smiling)  
Well, that's no way to greet the  
Provost.

Pithy jumps. She turns around and sees Provost Tishbah standing right behind her.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)  
(warmly)  
Good morning, Pithy. I let myself  
in.  
(beat)  
Why the 'Oh no'?

PITHY  
Oh no, Elijah, that 'Oh no' wasn't  
for you. It was for Auri. He's  
dead.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
What? Ari's Dead? I just saw him  
yesterday. Why are you here?

PITHY  
Not Ari, Auri.

Pithy chuckles.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
Pithy, this isn't funny. Why did I  
not know this? Go home and let me  
take care of everything.

PITHY  
Ari is fine. He's alive and well.

She gestures to the dead goldfish.

PITHY (CONT'D)  
Auri the goldfish is not.

Provost TISHBAH SIGHS in relief.

ELIJAH TISHBAH

You named your goldfish after your husband?

PITHY

No, well yes, well, not really. Ari's name is a homophone for Auri the goldfish's name. Auri is short for Carassius auratus, the genus species of my now-deceased goldfish.

ELIJAH TISHBAH

I see.

PITHY

I came in early to have everything ready for Caroline's first day. Thanks again for getting me some help, by the way.

ELIJAH TISHBAH

My pleasure. That's why I stopped by, to see if you needed anything for her. You'll let me know how she's working out, of course.

PITHY

Of course. There is one tiny thing you could do for me?

ELIJAH TISHBAH

Anything.

PITHY

I need to run home and grab some flowers for the office.

Pithy places the Mason jar full of pencils Caroline's desk. She looks at the placement, and turns the jar by a quarter rotation.

PITHY (CONT'D)

I want everything to look just right. I should have time to get there and back...

Pithy turns the jar a bit again, then looks to reconsider her handiwork.

PITHY (CONT'D)

Would you mind holding down the fort in case she shows up early?

Provost Tishbah glances towards the goldfish.

ELIJAH TISHBAH

Not a problem at all. I'll stay as long as I can. I do have one thing I need to do, but I can let myself out the same way I let myself in.

PITHY

Thank you! I also guess I need to grab a matchbox to give Auri, the goldfish, not the husband, a proper burial.

She turns the Mason jar full of pencils back to the way she had it when she first placed it on Caroline's desk. She smiles. Perfect.

Pithy heads towards the door.

PITHY (CONT'D)

If I have time, I'll stop by the lunchroom to grab my Overnight Oats. Can I bring you back anything?

ELIJAH TISHBAH

Oh, those Overnight Oats do sound good, but--

PITHY

--but you didn't order any last night?

ELIJAH TISHBAH

Exactly.

PITHY

No problem. I ordered two, one for me and one for Caroline. You can have mine. I'll grab something else for me.

Pithy is in the doorway.

PITHY (CONT'D)

If truth be known, I'm having a hankering for some ham.

Pithy exits.

Tishbah waits a moment then slowly walks over to the door. He sticks his head out the door and looks both ways. All clear.

He walks over to the goldfish jar.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 (to himself)  
 The truth is it's too early.

Tishbah, using his righthand, scoops up the goldfish. He gently clasps his hands together, with the fish between them, as if he were making a snow ball -- except he applies almost zero pressure. Almost.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)  
 Too soon, too soon.

He removes his left hand from the grasp, and cradling the goldfish in his right hand, he dips it back into the water-filled goldfish jar.

The goldfish swims down to the bottom, then halfway back up. It swims up to the glass and watches Provost Tishbah walk out the office door.

The water trembles with a small earthquake tremor.

INT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Harriette, now working alongside her helper Tillie, is still behind the counter preparing the aluminum trays of food for this morning's breakfast service. Her back is to the food line, as is Tillie's.

Caroline, trailed by her pig friend, timidly enters the cafeteria. She takes a deep breath to mentally prepare herself.

Caroline steels her eyes straight ahead with determination, while addressing the pig.

CAROLINE  
 You ready for this? I am. Let's  
 hope I haven't cut a fat hog.

Caroline glances down at the pig apologetically.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
 No offense.

Caroline and the pig walk up to the food line. She whispers to the pig.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
 (sotto)  
 You might want to stay behind me.  
 (MORE)

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Last time she was madder than a  
boar in a stampede.

(beat)

No offense.

Caroline grabs the top cafeteria tray, and slides it onto the food line.

BEHIND THE FOOD LINE

Harriette and Tillie keep working and do not turn around.

IN FRONT OF THE FOOD LINE

Caroline picks up a sheet of paper, Today's Menu, from a stack atop the class partition. She reads aloud.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Not many choices, three things.

BEHIND THE FOOD LINE

Harriette doesn't turn around. Instead she mutters to Tillie, while they are stirring something that looks like oatmeal in a giant 3-foot wide x 4-foot long x 1-foot deep aluminum tray.

HARRIETTE

'Not much of a choice.' Three separate breakfasts, seven days a week, that's twenty-one breakfast items. Sounds like a choice to me.

Harriette bangs her spoon to knock off the cereal into the giant tray. She motions to Tillie to do the same.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)

Here. Help me lift this.

Their hands full, it's all Harriette and Tillie can do to lift the giant tray of food without sloshing it or spilling any. They slowly begin to walk it over to another table, still behind the counter, about ten feet away.

Harriette still has her back to the wall. She motions with a nod of her head to a large HELP WANTED sign on the wall.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)

If we spill this, the food we waste could pay for that other worker we need.

IN FRONT OF THE FOOD LINE

CAROLINE

Wheatana... No, that won't do.

(beat)

Hotcakes with ham... Mmmm, that sounds good--

Caroline realizes what she's said aloud, and looks down at the pig.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

No offense.

She looks back down to the sheet of paper.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Hotcakes and ham won't do.

(beat)

That leaves Overnight Oats.

Caroline looks over the counter and sees Harriette and Tillie now slowly and carefully pouring the oatmeal-like substance directly from the large, heavy aluminum tray into individual bowls. GLUB, GLUB, GLUB.

Neither Harriette nor Tillie can not turn around now without spilling the large tray, even if they wanted to. Harriette of course, doesn't want to.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Excuse me. When you're done pouring over there, could I get two bowls of Overnight Oats?

HARRIETTE

Can't you see we're busy? Busy, I might add, pouring your Overnight Oats.

CAROLINE

Oh. Well, that's why I said 'when you're done pouring over th'--

HARRIETTE

When we're done pouring over here, we'll be labeling these bowls with the last name of the customers who ordered last night to pick theirs up today.

Harriette and Tillie continue to slowly pour. GLUB. GLUB. GLUB.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)  
Your last name? Save me from  
labeling two.

CAROLINE  
Oh, I didn't order any last night.  
I didn't know I wanted any last  
night.

HARRIETTE  
If you want Overnight Oats, you  
have to order them the night  
before.

CAROLINE  
Really? Does everything have to be  
ordered the night before?

HARRIETTE  
Does everything have the word  
'Overnight' at the front of it?

CAROLINE  
Well, n--

HARRIETTE  
Well no. There's only one item  
called 'Overnight' anything. Why  
else would I call them 'Overnight  
Oats?' You gotta order them the  
night before.

CAROLINE  
Why exactly is that?

HARRIETTE  
Overnight Oats take overnight.

CAROLINE  
I've had oats that looked exactly  
like the stuff you are pouring  
there at other places and I didn't  
order them the night before.

HARRIETTE  
This isn't other places, and  
whatever they gave you, it wasn't  
Overnight Oats.

CAROLINE  
You mean I--

HARRIETTE

I mean you might've eaten oats, but they weren't overnight.

CAROLINE

What exactly makes them 'Overnight,' Harriette?

HARRIETTE

I just told you. You order them the night before.

Harriette pours the second to the last bowl. GLUB. GLUB. The tray is now light enough to handle by herself. Tillie goes to retrieve something, and returns with a spatula.

CAROLINE

Every one orders ahead? You never have someone who orders then doesn't pick them up? You don't make extra for people like me?

Harriette pours the last bowl. GLUB. Tillie takes the spatula and gets every last drop into the final bowl.

HARRIETTE

People like you? Who do you think you are?

CAROLINE

The truth is, I have somewhere important to be. I start my new job here today. Wheatana's not filling enough.

HARRIETTE

The truth is it's too early... to place your order for tomorrow's Overnight Oa--

Harriette looks again at the HELP WANTED sign.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)

Wait. You're starting here today? Did Tishbah send you? Who are y--

Harriette turns around for the first time since Caroline entered.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)

YOU!!!

Harriette charges towards Caroline, but she stops at the food line.



HARRIETTE (CONT'D)  
 Get out! Get out, get out, get  
 out!

The pig cowers.

CAROLINE  
 (firmly)  
 Calm down. I don't want any  
 trouble; I just want breakfast. I  
 start work here today.

HARRIETTE  
 What was Tishbah thinking? Not  
 with me you're not! Over my dead  
 body!

Caroline is shaken.

CAROLINE  
 Well, well, w-w-well, if that were  
 the case... At least I'd come  
 looking for you!!!

HARRIETTE  
 Listen, you nutter---

CAROLINE  
 No! Now YOU listen. My mother,  
 the mother who raised me, told me  
 the whole story as she lay there  
 dying.

Caroline is on the verge of crying, but she's too mad to cry.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
 Everyone here thought I was dead  
 the last forty years, BUT YOU--

Harriette walks away, back towards the table of Overnight  
 Oats bowls, where Tillie is covering and labeling the bowls  
 with names. Harriette angrily dismisses Caroline with a wave  
 of the hand.

Caroline loses it.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
 Don't walk away from me! Oh wait.  
 That's what you're good at!

HARRIETTE  
 I don't need to listen to yo--

CAROLINE

My own mother never even came to look for me? Even if I was dead, you didn't want to find me, and give me a decent burial?

HARRIETTE

Oh, is that what I should have done, you nut? Have you watched your child die seconds after you watched her father die? I was supposed to hop out of the hospital bed and play detective?

CAROLINE

I wasn't dead!

HARRIETTE

Great. Then you're not my daughter. My daughter is dead!

Harriette picks up a kitchen knife off the table. She points it at Caroline.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)

I don't know who you are, or where you came from -- but you've got some verve coming into MY lunch room with your ghost stories and accusations.

Harriette waves the knife around wildly.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)

Now get out, and don't come back!

CAROLINE

Or what? You're going to stab me so you can watch me die for real this time?

HARRIETTE

You... I mean, my daughter is dead. I saw her lifeless body with my own eyes. Nurse Hampton declared her dead. Just like my daughter's father.

Harriette is shaking now.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)

It's been forty years. I think about my dead child every day...

(MORE)

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)

You have no idea how hard my life was those first few years after the deaths.

Tillie is still labeling the bowls, still pretending to ignore what's going on.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)

You don't know what it was like to try to put my life back together. You don't know the work and family responsibilities, I had all alone.

CAROLINE

Family responsibilities! Ha! According to you, your family is dead.

HARRIETTE

How insensitive can you be? You deranged... You are--

CAROLINE

I am your daughter, and I'm alive, and you're going to have to get used to it, because you'll be seeing a lot of me, now that I work here.

HARRIETTE

You are beyond the pale! Tell Tishbah I fired you, you lunatic!

CAROLINE

Ha! I never said I start work here.

Caroline points to the floor she's standing on.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

I said I start work *here*.

Caroline opens her arms into an all-encompassing gesture.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Here. Here at Tishbah University.

Tillie has all of the bowls covered and labeled. There is one bowl with a cover, but no name on it.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

I told you I was just here for breakfast. You sure there's no extra Overnight Oats back there?

Tillie, who is behind Harriette, picks up the one unmarked bowl.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
I need something to eat. I need  
some Overnight Oats now. I'm  
starting with Pithy Stottle in a  
few minutes.

Tillie carefully walks around Harriette, who still hasn't put the knife down. Tillie approaches the back of the food line. Tillie lifts the bowl over the glass to offer it to Caroline.

HARRIETTE  
Great! Then I never have to see  
you again!

CAROLINE  
Is that what you said when they  
told you I had died?

On that note, as Caroline reaches to take the bowl from Tillie's hand, Harriette goes ballistic.

HARRIETTE  
Do NOT give her that bowl!

Harriette, forgetting she has the knife in her hand, swings at Tillie to knock the bowl away. The bowl goes flying across the lunchroom and lands by the door where Caroline entered earlier.

The pig runs over and begins eating the spilled oats.

TILLIE SCREAMS. Cut by the knife, Tillie's hand is bleeding badly.

Harriette points the bloody knife at Caroline.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)  
Now look at what you've done!

CAROLINE  
Me?

HARRIETTE  
I told you when you came in to get  
out. You're Pithy Stottle's problem  
now. Go.

Harriette grabs a towel and wraps Tillie's hand. She holds the towel tight, to make pressure, and turns her back on Caroline.

Harriette and Tillie walk away.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)  
 (to Tillie)  
 Come on. Let's go have Nurse Con  
 Con take a look at that.

Tillie looks back at Caroline, who is still standing on her side of the food line, trying to process what all just happened.

Harriette never looks back. They both walk out of sight.

CAROLINE SIGHS. She is exasperated. She looks over at the pig, who is licking up the last few drops of oats off the floor.

Caroline reaches over the glass partition and grabs a handful of hotcakes and stuffs them in her dress pocket. She grabs one more and stuffs it in her mouth and walks out.

CAROLINE  
 (to the pig)  
 Come on, pig. Time for work.

EXT. THE HARD TRUTH - DAY

On the sidewalk in front of the store, his face pressed against the large store front window, Carl Trudnich peers from the outside in.

TRUDNICH  
 (to himself)  
 Come on, Stottle. Time for work.

Ari Stottle walks up from behind Trudnich, and startles him.

ARI  
 Looking for someone, Trudnich?

Trudnich turns around and taps on his wristwatch.

TRUDNICH  
 About time you got here Stottle.

Stottle squeezes by Trudnich and fishes his keys out of his pocket.

ARI  
 I see you've joined the military.

Trudnich responds to the remark with a puzzled look.

ARI (CONT'D)  
Your watch.

TRUDNICH  
What about it?

ARI  
Um... Unexpectedly fashionable?

TRUDNICH  
I don't like to carry things in my  
pockets.

Ari opens the door and goes inside.

Trudnich begins to follow, pauses, reaches inside his pocket, pulls out a pancake, and stuffs it in his mouth. Just as the pancake disappeared inside Trudnich's mouth, Trudnich disappears inside the store

INT. PITHY STOTTLE'S OFFICE - DAY

A jar of fresh pink flowers is now nearby on the same bookshelf as the fish jar.

The biology skeleton stands by as Pithy, with a large matchbox in her hand, stands at the bookshelf, staring at the fish jar, her mouth agape. She is flabbergasted.

Pithy leans in for a closer look. The fish swims up and looks nose to nose with Pithy.

PITHY  
I've heard of cats having nine  
lives, but since when does cat food  
have the same--

Caroline and the pig walk in unnoticed.

CAROLINE  
Have the same what?

Pithy jumps!

PITHY  
Gaaaaaaahhh!

CAROLINE  
Sorry about that. I didn't mean to  
startle the new boss on the first  
day.

PITHY  
No, no... It's not you...

Pithy looks at the fish one last time and then looks at the pig down at Caroline's feet. She talks to Caroline, but she's staring at the pig.

PITHY (CONT'D)  
It's just been a really weird morning.

CAROLINE  
I hope you don't mind I brought him. Pig's been through a lot with me lately.

Pithy starts to speak, but then realizes she still has the matchbox in her hand. She sticks it in the biology skeleton's mouth.

PITHY  
(to the skeleton)  
You really ought to quit, Slim. Those things'll kill you.

Pithy looks distracted.

CAROLINE  
The pig. I hope you don't mind.

PITHY  
Oh, no. He's fine. Is he a he?

Pithy kind of looks underneath the pig.

PITHY (CONT'D)  
The more the merrier.

CON CON  
What were you saying about the weird morning?

Pithy looks at the fish again. Still alive.

PITHY  
Oh, never mind. Not sure I know have any answers to that.

Caroline awkwardly reaches into her dress pocket. She pulls out a hotcake and offers it to Pithy.

CAROLINE  
Hotcake?

PITHY

Um, no thanks. I just ate my Overnight Oats. You should try them.

CAROLINE

I tried to try them. Where do you think I got these hotcakes?

PITHY

Look. I know it's your first day and all, but what do you say we take an early lunch?

CAROLINE

You just said you just ate.

PITHY

And you have food in your pockets. We don't need to eat. I just need to get out of here.

CAROLINE

I could use some fresh air, I suppose.

PITHY

Great. I need to clear my head. Get some answers. Maybe we'll find some kind of a sign.

INT. THE HARD TRUTH - DAY

Ari is behind the checkout counter. Trudnich is still standing by the painting, staring.

TRUDNICH

A thousand dollars. My final offer.

ARI

You don't have a thousand dollars. And I told you a dozen times, it's not for sale. I need to find out where it came from and what it's worth.

Trudnich heads for the door.

TRUDNICH

It's worth what someone will give you for it, and I'll give you a thousand dollars for it.



ARI

Bye Carl.

Trudnich fumes, and yanks the door open, just in time for Nurse Con Con to roll in through the doorway. He's so mad, he doesn't wait for her to clear the doorframe, and they both momentarily struggle to go through in opposite directions.

Trudnich breaks free. Con Con rolls in.

ARI (CONT'D)

What a nice surprise, so early in the morning.

Ari walks from behind the counter, and heads towards the storage room door.

Con Con is already rolling in that direction.

ARI (CONT'D)

Did you bring them?

Con Con stops her chair, and pulls a six pack of soda from underneath a blanket on her lap. They are six large, thick glass bottles in a heavy cardboard carrier. They are so heavy, she has to lift them with both hands.

Ari passes her and opens the storage room door for her.

ARI (CONT'D)

Excellent.

Con Con rolls by into the back room.

ARI (CONT'D)

Cures what ails ya!

He pulls the storage room door shut behind them.

EXT. THE HARD TRUTH - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Caroline and Pithy stand in front of the shop, looking up at the storefront's sign.

CAROLINE

'Maybe we'll find some kind of sign.' Good one, Pithy.

PITHY

Yes, it is isn't it?

Realization.

PITHY (CONT'D)

Oh no.

Pithy pats her side.

PITHY (CONT'D)

My purse. I have some cash.  
Tishbah gave me an advance, so I'd  
have some walking around money  
until payday.

PITHY (CONT'D)

Of course he did.

Pithy takes off running in the direction they came from. She shouts back over her shoulder.

PITHY (CONT'D)

I left it on that bench where we  
stopped to talk. Go on in, I'll  
catch up with you in a minute.

INT. THE HARD TRUTH - CONTINUOUS

Caroline enters. Where's Ari?

Caroline looks around and realizes she doesn't see Ari anywhere. Before she can give it too much thought, the painting catches Caroline's eye. She cautiously approaches it.

She touches the cheekbone of the woman in the painting. Then she touches her own cheekbone. They are the same. She traces the lips of the painting with her fingertips, then touches her own lips. They too are the same. Her eyes widen.

Caroline hears noises coming from the back room. Caroline puts her ear to the door. Her eyes widen even further.

The MUFFLED NOISES get LOUDER, and there is LAUGHTER.

Caroline knocks on the storage room door. Three times, rapidly.

ARI (O.S.)

Good Lord, man, are you back? Go  
away Carl.

Moaning.

Caroline tries the door. It's unlocked. Caroline opens the door.

CAROLINE  
It's me Caroline. Who's Carl--

Caroline looks up.

Con Con with her blouse open is in an embrace facing -- and on top of -- Ari, who is seated in Con Con's chair. His pale bare legs -- with his pants down around his calves -- extend from beneath Con Con's skirt, which she has hiked up to straddle him.

All three of them make eye contact with each other. Silence

An empty, thick, glass soda pop bottle falls from the wheelchair. CLINK. It hits the floor.

Caroline slams the door.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
OhMyGodOhMyGodOhMyGod.

Pithy walks in.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
OhMyGodOhMyGodOhMyGod

Caroline is shaking. Pithy walks her over to a draftsman's stool behind Ari's checkout counter and sits her down. She tries to calm Caroline.

PITHY  
What's wrong?

CAROLINE  
ICantSayICantSayICantSay...

PITHY  
What? What can't you say?

Caroline freezes. She doesn't know what to do next. She looks around. Her eyes dart frantically. When they do stop, they land on some sign espousing an admonition to speak the truth.

Finally, Caroline's eyes land on the painting. She sees an out.

She points.

CAROLINE  
That!

Pithy looks.

PITHY

What?

CAROLINE

That! That painting!

Pithy walks gingerly towards the painting.

PITHY

This?

Pithy picks it up off the wall and examines it. She looks back at Caroline, then back at the painting. Then back at Caroline.

PITHY (CONT'D)

Is this you?

Pithy flips it over: 1859.

PITHY (CONT'D)

How can this be you?

Now Pithy is confused.

PITHY (CONT'D)

Where did this come from? Where's Ari?

Ari walks out of the back room, being careful not to open the door too wide. He is dressed, but disheveled.

ARI

(over-confidently)

I'm right here! What a pleasant surprise!

Ari takes the painting from her, and hangs it back on the wall. He kisses his wife. Hard. Caroline looks down.

Pithy smacks her lips.

PITHY

You taste different.

ARI

What a nice surprise, so early in the morning.

He doubles down on the kisses. Harder. She doesn't fight it, but doesn't prolong it either. The kiss ends. Then...

She leans back in and traces the perimeter of his lips with the tip of her tongue. She pulls away.

PITHY  
What is that taste?

Caroline stands up and turns her back to them. She starts flipping through the truth signs to preoccupy herself.

PITHY (CONT'D)  
It's sweet.

ARI  
Why thank you.

PITHY  
Not you. This...

Pithy licks her own lips.

PITHY (CONT'D)  
This tastes sweet. Good and sweet.

Caroline picks up a sign. From across the room...

CAROLINE  
Tell her.

Caroline walks towards the duo, carrying the sign.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
If you don't tell her, I will.

Ari grabs the painting off the wall.

ARI  
Tell her... tell you... where this painting came from? Want the truth? It was here when I rented the place.

CAROLINE  
Not that.

Caroline hands him the sign she carried over.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
This.

INSERT: White sign with black letters: Truth tastes bitter.  
Lies always taste good.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
Tell her what tastes so good and sweet on your lips.

PITHY  
Caroline, don't--

CAROLINE  
Tell her.

Ari smiles. He raises one finger to indicate, "I'll be right back." He opens the storage room door barely enough to squeeze through, then darts in.

Caroline stares at Pithy awkwardly. Pithy is still licking her lips. She's genuinely trying to decode a new taste.

PITHY  
It's so sweet. Here. Taste.

Pithy gives Caroline a super quick kiss on the lips, barely even a second. Caroline's eyes widen.

PITHY (CONT'D)  
See? Sweet. Have you ever tasted anything like that?

Caroline shakes her head rapidly and adamantly "No!"

PITHY (CONT'D)  
Here. Try again.

Pithy gives Caroline another equally super-quick kiss. At the moment of contact, Ari walks out of the back room.

ARI  
Is there something I should know about?

His joke makes Caroline visibly angry.

CAROLINE  
Is there something you'd like to shar--

ARI  
--share? There sure is!

He pulls two heavy, thick glass bottles filled with a brown liquid out from behind his back.

ARI (CONT'D)  
Cures what ails ya!

With a slick flip of the wrist, he pops the metal lids off the glass bottles with another piece of metal. He hands one bottle to each of them.

Pithy tentatively puts the bottle to her lips. Caroline does not.

Pithy partakes. Caroline does not.

Pithy smiles. Caroline does not.

PITHY

I've never tasted anything like that. So sweet and refreshing.

Caroline is still mad and still not trying hers. Pithy reaches for Caroline's bottle. Caroline hands it to her.

PITHY (CONT'D)

We better be going. We need to get back to work.

Caroline turns to Ari.

PITHY (CONT'D)

Caroline isn't thirsty.

Caroline, calmly, eerily so, hands the bottle back to Ari.

PITHY (CONT'D)

Here. Maybe give this enjoyable flavorful treat to whoever the flavorful treat is you've been enjoying in the backroom today.

Caroline is in shock. Ari is expressionless.

Pithy nods at the bottle which is now in Ari's hand.

PITHY (CONT'D)

Hope that stuff gives you energy. Judging by the way you kissed me, you haven't finished what you started with whoever that is back there.

Pithy calmly opens the door and motions for Caroline to exit first. She does.

PITHY (CONT'D)

We'll be taking the sign. I'll hang it up in my office to remind myself to stop visiting you during lunch.

(beat)

Don't be late for dinner.

Pithy exits and pulls the door shut behind her.

Beat.

The door re-opens. Pithy peeks her head in. She speaks softly so Caroline doesn't hear her and her voice cracks a bit.

PITHY (CONT'D)

I'd appreciate if you stop off at the bathhouse on the way home, and get all of "her flavor" washed off before you try to kiss me again, you piece of--

Pithy slams the door shut.

INT. PROVOST TISHBAH'S OFFICE - DAY

Harriette and Tillie sit across the desk from Provost Tishbah.

HARRIETTE

I know you believe that, but nevertheless, I want Caroline gone.

ELIJAH TISHBAH

I understand, Harriette. I really do. It's just...

Harriette looks crestfallen. She knows she's lost. He motions for Tillie to follow her towards the door.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)

...too soon, too soon.

Trudnich peeks in.

Harriette squeezes past Trudnich in the doorway. She doesn't look back. Trudnich enters. Tillie maneuvers around Trudnich and waves goodbye to Tishbah with her bandaged hand. She exits.

Trudnich plops down in one of the recently-vacated chairs.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (CONT'D)

Just make yourself at home, Trudnich.

TRUDNICH

I need a thousand dollar advance on my pay.



ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 How are you this morning, Trudnich?  
 What brings you to my office this  
 morning?

TRUDNICH  
 Better make it fifteen hundred.  
 This woman is priceless.

Tishbah is intrigued. He leans forward.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 A woman?

TRUDNICH  
 I've never seen anything like her.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 Thing? I don't think women are th--

TRUDNICH  
 I must own her!

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 Trudnich! We do not own wom--

Now Trudnich leans forward.

TRUDNICH  
 (sotto)  
 I think she's a virgin. I can see  
 it in her eyes.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
 Trudnich! Enough! Besides the eyes  
 are really where one loses her v--

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE PROVOST TISHBAH'S OFFICE - DAY

Harriette, and by default, Tillie, never left the hallway.  
 Harriette is listening through the door.

ELIJAH TISHBAH (O.S.)  
 (muffled)  
 ..mmmrmmnity.

HARRIETTE  
 I can only make out every other  
 word, and I've still heard enough.  
 If I didn't know better, I'd think  
 Tishbah is explaining how a woman  
 loses her v--

INT. PITHY STOTTLE'S OFFICE - DAY

Pithy and Caroline are back at Pithy's office. The biology skeleton now has one of the pink flowers in his teeth. The pig is curled up at the skeleton's feet, fast asleep. Pithy stares in to the goldfish jar again. The fish, still alive, stares back.

CAROLINE

...virginity? My virginity? Why are we talking about my virginity?

(blushing)

How'd you know I'm still a virgin?

PITHY

I can see it in your eyes.

Caroline is wide-eyed.

CAROLINE

(earnestly)

That's how it's done???

Pithy is trying to hold back her laughing.

PITHY

You really don't know, do you?

CAROLINE

Never had to think about it. It's only been me and my mo-- the woman you all know as Head Nurse Hampton -  
- for forty years.

Pithy listens.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

I've never even seen a man kiss a woman until tod...

Caroline stops herself. She looks at the sign leaning against the wall next to the skeleton.

INSERT - White sign with black letters: Truth tastes bitter. Lies always taste good.

BACK TO SCENE

Caroline changes the subject by addressing the skeleton. She grabs the sign.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Come on, Slim. Come help me hang this sign.

INT./EXT. BATHHOUSE - DAY

Tillie, her hand wrapped in a fresh bandage, pushes Nurse Con Con in her wheelchair through the front wooden door, which is propped open, past the community dressing/changing area, past the individual changing areas, past the shallow area for foot washing, and out the back door to the wooden pier which extends into the river.

There is makeshift roof over 20 feet of the 30 foot pier. The roof consists of fabric panels lashed to the top of eight telephone poles sticking 50 feet above the river's surface.

The pier slopes at a gradual angle down into the water.

Tied to each wooden pylon holding up the pier are heavy ropes for non-swimmers to hold onto while bathing.

At the far end of the sloped pier, there are two additional pylons sticking up five feet above the pier, one on each side of the pier. They too have ropes.

Tillie stops at the top of the incline. She surveys the challenge.

TILLIE

Pepper is thin herself, and she's probably twice my size. Now that we're here, tell me again how she's able to do all this?

CON CON

I appreciate you stepping in for her. She has classes in the afternoon. I feel extra dirty today. I couldn't wait until tomorrow morning.

A swarm of gnats buzzes by, and Con Con waves them away.

CON CON (CONT'D)

Being swarmed by insects only makes that feeling worse.

TILLIE

I love helping. I just want to do this right.

CON CON

You turn my wheelchair around, so I'm facing the bath house. And my back is to the water.

Tillie wheels the wheelchair around, 180 degrees, and she is now standing between Nurse Con Con and the end of the pier.

CON CON (CONT'D)  
Now you turn around and face the end of the pier, face the water, so we are back-to-back.

Tillie lets loose of the wheelchair's handlebars and turns herself around to face the water. Her back is against the chair, and her feet are thrust forward to stop the chair from sliding down the incline.

CON CON (CONT'D)  
Now walk. But just one step at a time. Go ahead. Take the first step.

Tillie takes one step.

CON CON (CONT'D)  
That's great. Now stop.

Another swarm of gnats buzz by. Con Con again swats them away.

CON CON (CONT'D)  
Annnnnd, one more.

Tillie takes one more step.

CON CON (CONT'D)  
Great. Make sure you come to a complete stop after each step. Okay, another.

Tillie takes a step.

CON CON (CONT'D)  
If you don't come to a complete stop after each step, the chair will gain momentum. Okay, do another.

Tillie does one more.

CON CON (CONT'D)  
It takes Pepper exactly eight steps to get to the bottom, but your legs are a little shorter. Probably take you ten altogether. Should have six left.

Tillie takes another step.

CON CON (CONT'D)  
 Good good. Five left.

Another.

CON CON (CONT'D)  
 Four left. Now remember, when you  
 get to the bottom, you're going to  
 lift me out of the chair and lean  
 me up against that pylon down there  
 on the left--

TILLIE  
 --and then you'll lower yourself  
 using those ropes down into the  
 water. Got it.

CON CON  
 As soon as I'm out of the chair,  
 turn it on its side, so it doesn't  
 roll into the water. Go ahead,  
 we're almost there.

Tillie takes one more step.

CON CON (CONT'D)  
 Three more to go. You're so close.

Again, a swarm of gnats buzz by, this time towards Tillie.  
 A few actually land on her shirt's left sleeve, and she  
 instinctively smacks at them -- hitting her left arm with her  
 right hand. Which is in a bandage. Which is covering her  
 knife wound.

She doubles over in pain.

TILLIE  
 Owwwwwww.

CON CON  
 Tillieeeeeeee!!!

Tillie looks up and realizes she's jumped away from the  
 wheelchair. There's only about five feet remaining until the  
 end of the pier. The wheelchair is rolling towards that end.

Tillie looks up and sees where the wheelchair is headed.

Again, instinctively she leaps and grabs the wheelchair with  
 force. With her bandaged hand.

TILLIE  
 Owwwwwwwwwwwwww!

This time, however, she doesn't let go.

Tillie's inner-strength rises to the occasion, and she is able to yank the wheelchair back, causing it to stop abruptly.

The chair stops so fast and so suddenly that Nurse Con Con is ejected from the chair. She flies into the water.

Tillie runs to the end of the pier and looks over the edge.

Nothing.

TILLIE (CONT'D)

Oh no.

Then all of sudden, Nurse Con Con pops up through the surface of the water. She grabs a rope hanging from the pylon, and believe it or not, is where she would've been anyway were it not for the gnats.

CON CON

Tillie! Look! The gnats!

Tillie looks behind her, and sees that somehow, miraculously, the upright chair has not rolled into the water.

However, the biggest, blackest swarm of gnats you've ever seen is headed directly towards the chair.

The wind from the giant gnat fly-by is just barely enough to set the wheel chair in motion. It slowly begins to roll.

CON CON (CONT'D)

Tillie! Look! The chair.

Tillie sees where the chair is headed and run towards it. She again instinctively grabs it with her bandaged right hand.

TILLIE

Owwwwwwww.

Recoiling in pain, Tillie lets go of the chair momentarily. She realizes immediately what she has done and grabs it back with a yank.

It works. The chair stops. Tillie walks around to lay the chair on its side. When she does, place it on its side, a soda bottle dislodges from the chair. It rolls towards the water.

Tillie grabs for the rolling bottle just as it rolls off the pier.

TILLIE (CONT'D)

Gotchya.

Except she grabbed it with her bandaged hand.

TILLIE (CONT'D)

Owwwwwwwwwwww!

Tillie again doubles over in pain. She starts to fall into the water, but on her way down, drops the bottle onto the pier, and she again instinctively grabs for the chair, pulling it down on top of her into the water.

CON CON

Tillieeee!!!!

Before Tillie is completely submerged the soda bottle rolls off the end of the pier, hits Tillie's forehead and knocks her out cold.

Tillie goes under. Air bubbles escape to the surface.

Until they don't

Using the ropes and the edge of the pier, Nurse Con Con works her way over to where Tillie went under. There is no sign of life anywhere.

Nurse Con Con cries, then cries for help. She screams and cries for a full sixty seconds. Then she gives up. She weeps softly.

Tillie's lifeless body bobs back up to the surface. Her eyes are glazed over. She is not breathing.

Tillie is dead.

INT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Harriette is working behind the lunchline, alone. She appears more frazzled than usual. She pulls a tray of biscuits out of the oven.

Trudnich walks up, grabs a tray, slams it down on the food line.

Harriette knows that slam. She spins around.

HARRIETTE

How long have you worked here? You know dinner doesn't start for another hour.

TRUDNICH

And you know I'm starving, because  
this morning--

HARRIETTE

--because this morning, you showed  
up an hour early for breakfast,  
just like you're showing up an hour  
early for dinner. It's just now  
four oh clock.

Harriette places the biscuits behind the glass on her side of  
the food line.

TRUDNICH

I'm well aware of the time. You're  
well aware of the fact that you  
still have my Overnight Oats back  
there.

HARRIETTE

I fed them to a pig.

TRUDNICH

Real funny. Now give me my  
Overnight Oa... What the..."

Trudnich looks down and there's a pig licking his shoes. He  
starts kicking at it, trying to shoo it away.

TRUDNICH (CONT'D)

Shoo! Shoo!

CAROLINE

He's smart, but if you're going to  
teach him to talk, I wouldn't start  
with "shoe," or any other article  
of clothing.

Caroline is in line behind Trudnich. He's ignoring her  
talking, still trying to free his foot from the licky pig.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

I'd start with something simple...

Caroline looks at Harriette, who is frozen with anger.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

...like 'Mama'...

Caroline looks back to Trudnich.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

...or 'Hello.'



Still kicking at the pig, Trudnich looks annoyed. Until he looks up.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
Speaking of which...

Caroline thrusts out her hand for him to shake.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
Hello. I'm Caroline.

TRUDNICH'S POV - CAROLINE'S FACE

smiles warmly.

INSERT - PAINTING

The warm smile of the woman who looks like Caroline in the painting on the wall at The Hard Truth.

BACK TO SCENE

Caroline is still smiling. Trudnich can not believe his eyes.

Trudnich faints. He hits his head hard on the lunch counter on his way down.

Caroline gasps, then kneels over, and lightly pats his face.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
Mister? Mister? Oh no. Wake up,  
Mister.

The pig licks Trudnich's cheek, then lips. Ew.

Harriette breaks out of her frozen silence, and runs around to the front of the food line. She pushes the pig and Caroline away, and kneels over Trudnich in their stead.

Harriette's anger is replaced with genuine concern. Now she begins to gently tap Trudnich's face with her right hand, while she caresses it with her left hand.

HARRIETTE  
Oh baby, baby, wake up, baby.

Caroline stands there perplexed. She's only seen Angry Harriette. This is new.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)  
Don't leave me, baby.

Harriette realizes Caroline, and the pig, are staring at her. Angry Harriette is back.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)  
Why are you here? Go. Get out of here. Haven't you done enough?

CAROLINE  
I came by to check on Tilli--

HARRIETTE  
Tillie can't work until the bandages come off. Thanks to you.

CAROLINE  
Plus, I need dinner. Like it or not...

HARRIETTE  
What you need is to leave. Leave, leave, leave!

Harriette turns away to attend to Trudnich again. She's done with Caroline. She's Compassionate Harriette again.

CAROLINE  
(to herself)  
...like it or not, I work here now.  
I still need to eat.

Harriette completely ignores Caroline now. Harriette cradles Trudnich's head.

HARRIETTE  
Don't leave me, baby, don't leave me, don't leave me.

Seeing Harriette actually care about someone unsettles Caroline. She's crushed, but she can't look away.

Harriette rocks Trudnich in her arms. She sobs. She kisses his forehead.

Caroline cracks.

CAROLINE  
C'mon, pig. Let's leave these two lovebirds alone.

Caroline reaches over the glass and grabs three or four biscuits. She stuffs them in her pockets.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
 Whoever her friend is, he clearly  
 has something I'll never have.

HARRIETTE  
 You're darn right he does.

Uh oh. Angry Harriette is back again.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)  
 I heard that... You... Y-you...  
 Y-y-you imposter. You poser! This  
 precious man is more than a friend!  
 This is my son.  
 (beat)  
 My real son!

Caroline goes pale. She takes off running. Out the cafeteria door. The pig goes to follow. But Caroline leaves so fast, the door slams behind her, trapping the pig inside the cafeteria.

The pig curls up in a ball at the door to wait.

Harriette now cradles Trudnich completely. She too curls up in a ball around him to wait.

EXT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY - LATE AFTERNOON

Caroline runs. Faster and faster and faster. She runs past trees, and university buildings, and more trees. She runs as if she is running for her life.

Her cheeks redden. Her breathing becomes labored. Yet she keeps running, faster, harder.

Caroline encounters no one on this run until she nears the bathhouse. About 100 yards from the river, Caroline runs up on Ari Stottle with a towel over his arm, headed toward the bathhouse. She has to zigzag around him to avoid a collision. Caroline does not slow down. In fact, she speeds up.

Caroline runs past the bathhouse in the greenspace between the front of the bathhouse and the back of the girl's dorm. She hits her peak speed and stride as she wraps around the outer East wall of the dorm.

Caroline rounds the final corner, at full speed, then comes to a full stop, slamming herself against the door jam of the front door of the girls' dorm.

INT. GIRL'S DORM - SLEEPING QUARTERS

The front door, which opens to the inside, swings open at full force and slams into the adjacent wall.

Pepper, Hattie, Marlette, and Bellabeulah all look up at the same time.

Caroline, out of breath, dripping with sweat, slumps into the doorframe.

She takes a moment to catch her breath.

CAROLINE

No one. Told me.  
Harriette. Has a son???

Pepper, Hattie, Marlette, and Bellabeulah all look down at the same time.

INT./EXT. BATHHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Ari takes off all of his clothes in a private changing room, and wraps a towel around his waist. He exits the bathhouse and heads down the pier, towards the water.

ARI

Need to make sure I'm extra clean  
for the wife tonight.

When Ari is halfway down the pier, he sees the top of a head bobbing up and down on the left hand side at the very bottom of the incline.

ARI (CONT'D)

Con Con? Is that you? How  
fortuitous.

Nurse Con Con doesn't answer. He walks closer.

ARI (CONT'D)

Connie, is that you?

Nurse Con Con nods. She's crying. Ari runs to her.

ARI (CONT'D)

What's wrong? Say something.

He pulls her out of the water. She's shivering. He takes his towel off and wraps it around her. She's sobbing so violently, she can't speak.

He sits on the left hand side of the pier, holding Con Con to warm her up, facing upriver.

ARI (CONT'D)  
Where's Pepper? Where's your  
chair?

Nurse Con Con finally whispers three words between the sobbing.

CON CON  
No Pepper. Tillie.

ARI  
Tillie? Where's Tillie.

Nurse Con Con gestures by nodding towards the water behind them, over his shoulder.

Tillie, blue, eyes wide-open, bloody gash in her forehead, floats tangled in ropes, trapped between the wheelchair and the pier. The glass soda pop bottle is now wedged between the spokes of one of the wheels.

INT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Pepper, Hattie, and Marlette attend to Trudnich. He is flat on his back and his eyes are open. Harriette is right there in the thick of things as well. Bellabeulah is a few feet away petting the pig.

PEPPER  
I don't get it. His pulse is fine.  
His breathing is regular.

HARRIETTE  
Where's Nurse Con Con?

PEPPER  
No idea. Let's worry about your  
son right now. Do you have any  
matches?

HARRIETTE  
Always.

Harriette pulls a small container of matches from her apron, and hands them to Pepper.

Pepper strikes a match against the floor and waves it in front of Trudnich's open eyes.

PEPPER

His pupils are responding fine.

Pepper extinguishes the match. She looks at Hattie.

PEPPER (CONT'D)

What do you think? You've been here as long as I have. What do you think?

HATTIE

All of his vitals are fine. I say we just wait.

PEPPER

Marlette?

MARLETTE

Wait.

Pepper looks over to Bellabeulah who is still with the pig.

BELLABEULAH

I'm the new girl here, but there's something off.

HARRIETTE

(angry, but at their mercy)

No kidding. I know you girls are just trying to help, but--

BELLABEULAH

I've seen some of our farm animals back home do this, they freeze when they're scared.

She strokes the pig as she thinks.

BELLABEULAH (CONT'D)

A calm farm animal, like this pig here, has stable levels of serotonin. But when something scares them, the level spikes, and they freeze. Like Trudnich there.

She points at Harriette.

BELLABEULAH (CONT'D)

You're the only one here. I doubt his own mother would scare him. At least not that much.

PEPPER

Was anyone else here with you when  
he faint...

FLASHBACK - INT. GIRL'S DORM - SLEEPING QUARTERS - DAY

The front door, which opens to the inside, swings open at full force and slams into the adjacent wall.

Pepper, Hattie, Marlette, and Bellabeulah all look up at the same time.

Caroline, out of breath, dripping with sweat, slumps into the doorframe.

She takes a moment to catch her breath.

CAROLINE

No one. Told me.  
Harriette. Has a son???

Pepper, Hattie, Marlette, and Bellabeulah all look down at the same time.

Long beat.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Go! Go help him! He's in the  
lunchroom. I'll go find Nurse Con  
Con. He hit his head. Go!

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO SCENE

Now back in the lunchroom, Pepper, Hattie, Marlette, and Bellabeulah all look back up at the same time.

ALL THE GIRLS

Caroline!

HARRIETTE

As crazy as I think she is, that  
can't be it. He's never even seen  
her until today.

Harriette throws her arms up in defeat.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)

She's certainly trouble, but I  
doubt she's scary enough to him to  
affect his sera... sera... sera--

ALL THE GIRLS  
Serotonin!

HARRIETTE  
What else raises serotonin?

Pepper, Hattie, Marlette, and Bellabeulah all look back down at the same time.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)  
What?

Pepper, Hattie, Marlette, and Bellabeulah all look amongst themselves without looking back up.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)  
WHAT?

INT. PITHY STOTTLE'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

OPEN ON Auri, the goldfish, swimming in his jar. The biology skeleton stands nearby. Pithy is cleaning off her desk, putting her things away for the day.

Caroline is in the door jam.

CAROLINE  
What?

PITHY  
Love. Only two things raise serotonin like that. Fear or love.  
(beat)  
Or I guess a combination of both.

CAROLINE  
I've never had anyone look at me like that before. It was weird. Wasn't bad -- but definitely weird.

PITHY  
Good. I mean not 'good' that it wasn't bad, but 'good' that it was weird for you and it's never happened before.  
(beat)  
Falling in love for the first time at forty, THAT would not be good.  
(beat)  
Not to mention that he might be your brother.



CAROLINE

It was like I was looking into my own eyes. Oh, he's my brother -- my twin brother -- alright.

PITHY

I'm starting to believe you. All the more reason not to fall in love for the first time.

CAROLINE

I grew up experiencing my mother's love, so it wouldn't be the first time, but--

PITHY

Caroline. It's not--

CAROLINE

--but yes, I've told you before I've never seen a man kiss a woman. In fact, she never had any men come around at all.

(beat)

So in Philly, I've never actually seen what love between a man and a woman even looks like.

PITHY

In Philly? Head Nurse Hampton took you to Philadelphia? All this time, you've just been fifty miles up the road?

CAROLINE

Yea, we never left Philly. Ever. 'til the day she died. Why's it matter?

PITHY

In Greek, Philadelphia means... brotherly love.

INT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY LUNCH ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Trudnich, alive and blinking, but still not moving, remains on the floor surrounded by Pepper, Hattie, and Marlette -- and Harriette who is livid. Bellabeulah and the pig are still sitting on the floor over by the door.

HARRIETTE

(disgustingly angry)

Love?

ALL THE GIRLS  
 (matter-of-factly)  
 Love.

HARRIETTE  
 What would he know about love? For  
 forty years, I never brought any  
 men around. He's never actually  
 seen what love between a man and a  
 woman even looks like.

NEAR THE ENTRANCE

The pig's ears perk up. Bellabeulah notices.

IN FRONT OF THE LUNCH COUNTER

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)  
 His father is dead. Toyt's wife is  
 dead. Tishbah's wife is dead.

NEAR THE ENTRANCE

From somewhere behind Bellabeulah, a distant faint, CLOP.  
 The pig notices, and Bellabeulah notices the pig noticing  
 something.

IN FRONT OF THE LUNCH COUNTER

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)  
 The only married couple he's been  
 around for any time at all is the  
 Stottles, so yeah, what would he  
 know about love?

NEAR THE DOOR

Still distant, but now Bellabeulah and the pig both hear it,  
 CLOP.

IN FRONT OF THE LUNCH COUNTER

Back over by Trudnich, they still do not hear the distant  
 sound. Marlette gets up.

MARLETTE  
 Harriette, where do you keep  
 unopened cleaning supplies?

HARRIETTE  
 In the closet to the left of the  
 sink. Wait, what?

Marlette is gone behind the lunch counter already.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)  
 Carl knows all he needs to know  
 about love... a mother's true love.

NEAR THE DOOR

Distant, but nearing, CLOP.

IN FRONT OF THE LUNCH COUNTER

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)  
 There's a lesson there, girls. I  
 know that's Nurse Con Con's job --  
 but since she's apparently nowhere  
 to be found right now -- I'll  
 impart my truths.

INT. PITHY STOTTLE'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Pithy and Caroline finish hanging the sign. They stand back  
 and look at it.

INSERT - White sign with black letters: Truth tastes bitter.  
 Lies always taste good.

INT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY LUNCH ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Harriette is still addressing the girls.

IN FRONT OF THE LUNCH COUNTER

HARRIETTE  
 Where's Marlette? She should hear  
 this too.

Harriette looks around.

HARRIETTE (CONT'D)  
 Oh well. Tell her later. A mother's  
 love is sufficient. My Carl has  
 never even noticed another woman.

NEAR THE DOOR

Getting closer, CLOP. Bellabeulah pulls the pig onto her lap  
 and holds it tightly.

INT. PITHY STOTTLE'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Pithy and Caroline are still looking at the sign.

PITHY

I hate it.

CAROLINE

I hate it for you.

Caroline climbs on a chair to take it down.

PITHY

Not to change the subject, but where's Tishbah? Have you seen him today?

CAROLINE

Come to think of it, no. I haven't seen him all day.

PITHY

I haven't seen him since before you started this morning.

CAROLINE

That seems odd.

Pithy looks over to the goldfish. The goldfish looks out through the jar.

PITHY

Yes. Odd.

INT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY LUNCH ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Harriette is still with Pepper and Hattie, who are still near Trudnich, who is still alive and blinking. Marlette is still not back yet.

NEAR THE DOOR

Bellabeulah is still holding the pig.

CLOP. That has to be coming from the hallway, not twenty-feet behind Bellabeulah.

IN FRONT OF THE LUNCH COUNTER

HARRIETTE

You're right, Pepper, that is odd. I haven't seen Tishbah since I took Tillie to see him. And why isn't she with you girls? And why isn't Con Con here yet? Where is everybody? Where's that Marlette?

MARLETTE  
I'm right here.

HARRIETTE  
Gahhhhhh!

Marlette stands right behind Harriette. She has a cloudy glass jug in one hand and a kitchen rag in the other.

MARLETTE  
I don't know why one of us didn't think of this sooner.

NEAR THE DOOR

The pig nuzzles in closer to Bellabeulah. CLOP. Whatever it is sounds like it's ten feet away now.

IN FRONT OF THE LUNCH COUNTER

Marlette kneels down over Trudnich. She places the rag over the mouth of the jug.

NEAR THE DOOR

Three feet. LOUDER CLOP. Bellabeulah/pig huddled tight.

IN FRONT OF THE LUNCH COUNTER

Marlette inverts the jug.

MARLETTE (CONT'D)  
Ammonia.

NEAR THE DOOR

Behind the door. LOUDEST CLOP. Pig tries to squirm away. Bellabeulah holds on for dear life.

IN FRONT OF THE LUNCH COUNTER

The girls and Harriette look at the door; even they heard that last clop.

Harriette looks back to Marlette, nods the "go ahead."

Marlette holds the ammonia-drenched rag to Trudnich's nose and mouth.

TRUDNICH GASPS LOUDLY and sits bolt upright. Startled by the gasp, looking away from the door and back to Trudnich, PEPPER and HATTIE SCREAM.

TRUDNICH CHOKES and COUGHS, as he catches his breath. He slowly stands to his feet. Harriette rushes to him, and silently hugs him like she's never going to let go. He looks awkward as he receives this public display of affection.

Pepper and Hattie silently hug Marlette. All smiles.

CLOP.

Everyone hears that one. It comes from inside the lunch room.

Hugs separate.

Everyone looks to the door.

Bellabeulah, prone and prostrate, covers the pig to protect it with her entire body. They are both shaking.

In the door frame stands HEAD NURSE "PEG LEG" HAMPTON.

HEAD NURSE HAMPTON  
Harriette. Where's Caroline...

Harriette faints.

HEAD NURSE HAMPTON (CONT'D)  
...our daughter.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

AROUND TISHBAH UNIVERSITY + SURROUNDING AREA - MONTAGE -  
(BLACK AND WHITE) (MOS)

A) INT. BETHLEHEM CITY MORGUE COLD STORAGE - NIGHT

A cadaver covered in a sheet is on the examination table in the middle of the room. Behind the table is a wall containing a bank of drawers. The CAMERA PANS the wall. CLOSE ON a single drawer. Written on that drawer in a grease pencil is: TILLIE TOYT, 11/11/1899

B) INT. STOTTLE'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

In the center of a large well-appointed upper class dining room, underneath a small chandelier, is a long rectangular dining room table. The table seats twelve, five side chairs along each side, an arm chair at each end.

Ari sits alone at the head of the table, reading a newspaper.

From the opposite end of the dining room, Pithy walks in carrying two plates filled with dinner. She walks across the entire dining room. He sets his newspaper aside. She sets a plate in front of Ari.

Pithy walks the sixteen feet down to the other end of the dining room table. She puts her plate down at the opposite end of the table from Ari. She sits. Sixteen feet apart from Ari. They eat without looking up.

C) INT. NURSE CON CON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Seated in a new wheelchair at her desk, Nurse Con Con nurses a bottle of soda at her desk. She stares blankly ahead. She tilts back and stares at the blank ceiling.

D) INT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY LUNCH ROOM - NIGHT

Blank ceiling. The CAMERA PANS DOWN to a table in the middle of the lunch room. Pepper, Hattie, Marlette, and Bellabeulah -- all with trays of food -- eat amid conversation. They are somber, but there are moments of animated hand gestures and smiles.

Pepper imitates -- respectfully, not mockingly -- the way Tillie used to jerk her head from speaker to speaker around the campfire. Warm smiles accompany the sadness when reminiscing about a friend who is gone too soon.

Provost Tishbah watches, concerned, from the doorway.

At the lunch line, Harriette hands over the counter a tray with two sandwiches on it to Trudnich on the other side of the glass.

Trudnich starts to take the tray, but then he hands it back. He points at one of the trays on her side of the glass. She scoops two scoops of turnips, then hands him back his tray.

E) INT. PITHY STOTTLE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The biology skeleton stands there in the dark. Auri the goldfish swims around aimlessly, then stares out through the jar into the room.

Out the window of Pithy's office, we barely see the light of two lanterns off into the distance.

F) EXT. TISHBAH UNIVERSITY LUNCH ROOM - NIGHT

Lit by two lanterns, Head Nurse Hampton and Caroline are leaning against the hitching post right outside the lunch room. Head Nurse Hampton is in the middle spot. They are both eating sandwiches. The pig nuzzles against Head Nurse Hampton's wooden leg.

As they talk, Head Nurse Hampton gestures wildly, excited to be alive. Wide-eyed and alert, Caroline appears to be hanging on her every word. Their smiles turn into laughter. FREEZE FRAME.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BETHLEHEM CITY MORGUE COLD STORAGE - NIGHT (BLACK AND WHITE) (MOS)

CLOSE ON that single drawer, on which is written in grease pencil: TILLIE TOYT, 11/11/1899

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BETHLEHEM CITY MORGUE COLD STORAGE - NIGHT

Color and sound have resumed.

Provost Tishbah mutters to himself as he walks into the morgue's cold storage. He searches the various writings on the fronts of each drawer. He finds the one marked for Tillie. He grabs a nearby pair of white cotton gloves and puts them on.

Tishbah opens the drawer. He pulls back the sheet to uncover Tillie's head. She's pale and still has a bloody open gash in her forehead.



Tishbah cries.

ELIJAH TISHBAH  
Too soon, too soon.

Tishbah gently wipes the blood from her forehead with his gloved hand. More blood comes out of the wound, covering entirely his gloved hand.

Tishbah places his hand on her forehead, almost like he's taking her temperature. He then applies more and More and MORE pressure.

Similar to Trudnich's ammonia-laced recovery, miraculously, Tillie springs back to life and sits bolt upright with a GASP.

Keeping the sheet wrapped around her, Tishbah lifts her from the drawer. She folds herself into his chest, and he hugs her like a grandfather.

As they hug, Tillie sobbing, Tishbah peels off his bloody gloves and throws them into the water basin on the table. The gloves float atop the water. Blood seeps from the gloves. The water turns increasing red.

The water, now fully red, ripples.

Earthquake tremors again.

THE END

AFTER CREDIT COOKIE

EXT. THE HARD TRUTH - DAY

Marlette and Bellabeulah walk up and get into the end of long line of at least fifty people, that stretches two blocks and winds into the door of The Hard Truth.

Occasional familiar faces are sprinkled into this line of strangers waiting to get into the store.

About at the halfway mark of this long line, Harriette and Tillie have set up a makeshift hot dog stand, selling hot dogs to those who have been standing in line so long. Tishbah is buying two hot dogs from them, while Pithy holds his place in line.

Most of the people in the front of the line are enjoying their hot dogs in various stages of consumption. Head Nurse Hampton is one of them. She finishes her hot dog and steps inside the store.

INT. THE HARD TRUTH - DAY

Head Nurse Hampton enters the store. She sees Ari behind the counter near the storefront window with his own short line of two or three customers waiting to buy a sign or two.

So what's the attraction that caused the line of fifty-plus outside?

Head Nurse Hampton sees, to the left of the door through which she just entered, an ice chest, 4 foot x 6 foot x 4 foot. To the left of the ice chest sits Nurse Con Con in her wheelchair. Her lap is full of coins, hundreds of coins.

The front of the chest, painted bright white and red, reads:  
ICE COLD  
PEPPER-HIRES PRESENTS  
NURSE CONNIE'S SODA POP  
"Cures What Ails Ya."

To the right of the ice chest stand Pepper and Hattie. Pepper grabs a bottle from the chest, holds it while Hattie pops the top with a piece of metal, and hands it to the customer. The customer throws some coins into Nurse Con Con's lap.

About twenty-five feet away from the new soda chest, is the storage room door. Three feet to the right of that door is the tall shelving unit. Between the storage room door and the shelving unit is the mysterious painting.

With their backs to the commotion, Trudnich and Caroline stand, staring in silence at the painting. She is about nine inches to the left of the painting. He is about nine inches to the right of the painting. We see the painting through the eighteen-inch space between them.

This painting has captivated each of them. Neither can look away. The world behind them has disappeared.

The CAMERA PANS down slowly, slowly, slowly, down the space between them.

Their hands. Eighteen inches apart.

Long beat.

Caroline steps a foot to her right and takes two fingers of Trudnich's hand, Carl's hand, into hers.

Carl steps to his left and closes the remaining space between him and Caroline.

Caroline takes the rest of Carl's hand in hers.

The CAMERA PANS down slowly, slowly, slowly, down the space which is no longer there between them, down to the floor.

The pig is licking Carl's shoe. Carl does not kick him away.

FADE TO BLACK.

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