GIRLFRIEND IN A COMA

by

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COLD OPEN

EST. ABERDEEN, WASHINGTON STATE - MORNING

Sunbeams after a night of rain. Dew shimmers equally on wildflowers, leaves, beer bottles, and empty Big Gulps on the shoulder of a two-lane highway. We're moving, and listening to The Smiths' "Girlfriend in a Coma."

> *"Girlfriend in a coma, I know, I know it's serious..."*

Sailing past the town's weathered sign: "Welcome to Aberdeen. Come As You Are." Passing strip malls with liquor stores, copy shops, and nail salons...

> *"Girlfriend in a coma, I know, I know it's really serious."*

Railroad tracks, a power plant, Perkins' restaurant...

> *"There were times when I could have murdered her, but you know, I would hate anything to happen to her. No, I don't want to see her."*

...We glide by Nathaniel J. Otterwax High School with its puddle soaked football field, and the sign out front that declares: HOMECOMING!

> *"Do you really think she'll pull through? Do you really think she'll pull through?"*

We land on the lone traffic light dangling at the highway's intersection, where a PIGEON has built a nest in the circular visor of the red light. The green light lights up. The pigeon ruffles awake, and takes flight.

> *"My, my, my, my, my, my baby, good bye."*

We push into the green light...

DISSOLVE & MATCH TO:

The pulsing green light of an EKG monitor. We are inside:

INT. HOSPITAL, INTENSIVE CARE BAY - SAME

We follow the monitor's leads to long-term coma patient: KAREN MCNEIL, 34, serene, gaunt, angelic. A blase PHYSICAL THERAPIST, 27, bends and stretches Karen's arms. A daily routine. The Therapist looks to a NURSE, 24, at the station:

PHYSICAL THERAPIST
What's it again?

The Nurse is working a crossword puzzle.

NURSE
Blank Perry. Four letters.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST
Katy.

NURSE
Nope. Not a K.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST
Matthew Perry. Try Matt.

NURSE
Already did. Can't end in a T.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST
(thinks, stretches Karen)
Four letters. Hmm...

Silence, as they ponder four-lettered Perry's. And then, in a groggy, raspy whisper, Karen McNeil utters her first word in seventeen years:

KAREN
Luke.

The Therapist jumps back.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST
What the fu --

The Nurse is spooked.

NURSE
-- Who said that?!

The Therapist shakes her head "Not me." Afraid to go back to the bed alone, she whispers, panicked:

PHYSICAL THERAPIST
Oh-my-God-hurry-up-come-here!

They tiptoe to the bed and lean in for a cautious peek at Karen's comatose face: tranquil, quiescent. WTF?

TIME CUT:

INT. HOSPITAL, ICU BAY - MINUTES LATER

DR. WONG, 60's, inspects Karen and the monitors, looking for any sign of activity. Golf shoes and trousers under his lab coat. The Nurse and Therapist plead their case:

PHYSICAL THERAPIST
-- And then she said "Luke."
That's what she said.

NURSE
I heard it all the way over there --

DR. WONG
-- So you pulled me off the 16th hole on the first sunny morning in two months because Karen McNeil gave you the answer to 37 across? Is that what you're telling me?

NURSE
Well, we thought it was important.

DR. WONG
Important, sure, I could see that.
(with derision)
If she hadn't been in a coma since 1997. I don't know who's more brain dead, you or her.

He starts to leave, his golf spikes clicking as he goes. Karen's eyes pop open. She repeats herself, nice and clear:

KAREN
Luke Perry. 90210. Dylan McKay.
Pff.

Dr. Wong spins around. The Therapist faints.

CUT TO:

INT. MCNEIL HOUSE, KITCHEN - A SECOND LATER

A homey, middle-class kitchen. CONNIE MCNEIL, 51, Karen's mother, a homemaker who never lost hope, clutches the wall-phone. She's trembling. She buries the receiver in her chest and calls out at the top of her lungs:

CONNIE
Tom!!!

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

INT. TOM & CONNIE'S TAHOE - MORNING

Karen's dad, TOM MCNEIL, 51, a salt-of-the-earth electrician, focuses on the road. Stunned but steady, as Connie pelts him with unknowable scenarios:

CONNIE
God, Tom. What if she doesn't recognize us?

Tom dials a phone number on his navigation screen. We hear it ringing through the speakers...

TOM
They said she's lucid so I imagin --

CONNIE
-- Does she know it's been seventeen years? Oh God, and the baby. Does she know she had a baby?

TOM
I'd say there's a good shot she didn't even know she was pregnant --

CONNIE
-- Oh Tom, please. She knew.

VOICE THROUGH SPEAKERS
Otterwax High. How can I help you?

TOM
Hi there! This is Tom McNeil --

CONNIE
-- Because women know. We *know*.
(sudden about face)
You know what? I bet she had no clue -- that's what I bet.

VOICE THROUGH SPEAKERS
Hellllooo?

TOM
-- Yep. Sorry, got a little racket in the car. Tom McNeil here, could you put me through to Jim Hickey?

VOICE THROUGH SPEAKERS
Let me get him for you.

CONNIE
Oh geez, Jim Hickey, sitting at the bedside, thinking he's the dad --

TOM
-- How about one thing at a time? Things turned out okay for Jim.

CONNIE
-- No, Tom, they did not. When they put that brown little baby with her shiny black hair in Jimmy Hickey's skinny white arms --

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. OTTERWAX HIGH, JIM HICKEY'S OFFICE - SAME

Otterwax High Guidance Counselor, JIM HICKEY, 35, a low-achieving nice-guy with a rich wife, leans back in his ergonomic chair, perfectly happy to talk to Tom.

JIM
'Morning, Tom! Jim Hickey! What can I do for ya?

TOM
Hey Jim, we got a situation up at the hospital and Evie's not answering her phone.

Jim's chair springs upright. *Shit. Karen.*

TOM
Could you maybe track her down?

His eyes rack to a framed picture of his wife and kids.

TOM
-- Uh. Sure. Yep. Let me just. Tell you what. Stay on the line.

CUT TO:

INT. NATHANIEL J. OTTERWAX HIGH SCHOOL, AUDITORIUM - SAME

If you had to guess, you'd say Mexican -- even though her name is EVIE MCNEIL, she's 17, and a nonchalant junior. This is her campaign speech to a restless, texting student body:

EVIE
-- Or. Maybe you're not into change. That's cool, too.

Hanging from the stage's rafters is an eight-by-four foot, plywood sign with her yearbook photo blown up to fit, and the words: **"EVIE MCNEIL FOR PRESIDENT!"**

EVIE
...Maybe things are great the way they are. Either way, you still need someone to stand at the gate and say: Leave us alone, we got it covered. And to that I say: Wake up, Otterwax! That someone is me.

INT. OTTERWAX HIGH, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Rounding the corner, Jim spots Evie, fifty feet away, trying to hand fliers to the barrage of students pouring out of the auditorium -- they're ignoring her. She calls after them:

EVIE
Super thoughtful, thank you!

Hickey shoulders his way to her. A faculty member roaming the halls means students now give Evie an even wider berth.

EVIE
(to Hickey)
You're blowing up my spot.

JIM
I can see that. Phone call in my office. Sounds important.

They start walking. Without looking at him:

EVIE
You have a little sweat on your --

JIM
No. No, I don't.

He wipes his brow.

CUT TO:

INT. HICKEY'S OFFICE - SECONDS LATER

Jim watches Evie as she listens to Tom, examining her face for any clues about what the "situation" might be.

Evie's a cool customer, but we can see she's shaken.

EVIE
(faint, into phone)
When?
(then)
Okay.
(then)
Now, I guess.

She hands the phone back to Hickey so he can hang it up. She's in a daze.

EVIE
I have to go to the hospital.
(beat, bewildered)
My mom just came out of her coma.

HICKEY
Are you okay?

She shakes her head "no," but then catches Hickey discreetly trying to steady himself against his desk. She's confused.

EVIE
Are *you* okay?

HICKEY
Me? No, I'm great. Why wouldn't I be? Big news for you, though, yep.

Shock aside, Evie's already back on task:

EVIE
Oh-my-God-with-the-timing.
(then)
It's election week.
(shoves fliers at him)
Here. You need to pass these out.

She leaves. Hickey plops into his chair. Karen McNeil is awake. They very thought knocks the wind out him. He looks at the picture of his wife and kids. And turns it over.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL, ICU BAY - DAY

Karen's bed has been ratcheted up to an almost upright position. Her hair is wild and her eyes are bright. Tom and Connie approach, years of anguish crumbling with each careful step. Hopeful and quiet:

CONNIE
Hi, sweetheart.

Karen's not sure she recognizes them.

TOM
Hey Kare-bear, it's Mom and Dad.

A curious beat, as she takes them in.

KAREN
Holy crap. What happened to you guys? You look like crypt-keepers.

CONNIE
Well...
(*How do I say this?*)
...A lot of years have passed.

Karen's not sure if she believes them.

KAREN
Years? Like how many?

TOM
Seventeen. It's 2013.

It's as if they're kidding.

KAREN
No! That's the future!

CONNIE
Yeah, and now I'm fifty-one. Tom's fifty-two. That happened. Oh yeah.

We see Karen doing the horrible math, and what it means...

KAREN
Oh God. If you're -- then I'm --

TOM
-- Thirty-four.

KAREN
No. I'm Karen McNeil. Otterwax junior. Solid C minus. I have a yellow RAV-4, and yeah, there might be some weed in the glove box. Is that what this is? Are you guys trying to teach me a lesson?
(off their pitiful look)
Where's Hickey? He'll fix it.
(MORE)

KAREN (CONT'D)
We're fighting, but we're still a thing. Locker combo: 23-17-32. Molly Fink's cousin is the drummer for Smashing Pumpkins and was actually at Kurt Cobain's funeral. Karen McNeil. C minus. No soup for you.

CONNIE
Sweetie-pie...

KAREN
No. Wait. Oh, I get it. Dream inside a dream. Kind of creepy. I'm going back to sleep to get a better one --

Karen closes her eyes. Her parents lunge for the bed.

CONNIE & TOM
No! / Stay awake!

KAREN
Yeah, but this sucks.

CONNIE
There's something we need to tell you.

CUT TO:

EXT. TWO-LANE HIGHWAY - SAME

Karen's 1996 yellow RAV-4 barrels down the road. The bright orange needle on the speedometer teeters around 80-mph.

Meanwhile, A SQUAD CAR, is nestled in a berm.

INT. SQUAD CAR - CONTINUOUS

Two DEPUTIES (late 30's), smoke a joint, and lazily wag their radar gun out the window.

DEPUTY 1
Smoking hot, big-ass rack. And she is on m'jock. Coffee. Movies --

DEPUTY 2
-- You gotta give me a name.

DEPUTY 1
Can't do it, man. It's A.A.

DEPUTY 2
(thinking, then)
The red-head! From CVS! Dunzo!

The radar gun beeps. They pinch off the joint, and haul ass.

DEPUTY 1
Wheels up!

CUT TO:

TWO-LANE HIGHWAY - A SECOND LATER

Squad car on its tail, the RAV-4 sails through a red light before pulling over. Deputy 1 knocks on window. Obviously, it's Evie. She rolls down the window...

DEPUTY 1
Evie McNeil. What in the heck?!
You coulda killed someone!

EVIE
My mom woke up.

It's a small town: The Deputy knows how huge this is.

CUT TO:

TWO-LANE HIGHWAY

The squad car, lights spinning, gives Evie a police escort.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL, ICU BAY - SAME

Karen is peering down her hospital gown.

TOM
You kept getting bigger. Took us a while to figure out there was a baby in there --

KAREN
(pissed)
What. Happened. To. My. Boobs.

She looks back up.

CONNIE
Sorry hon, that's just...time.

KAREN
Ucch. Plus...
(looks down gown again)
...there's all these long gnarly scar things where my abs used to be. Did I, like, get in a fight with a wolverine?

CONNIE
Those are stretch-marks.

KAREN
Seriously? You let me get fat during the pregnancy?
(still looking in gown)
Okay, that one's definitely a scar, way down by my -- you know where I'm talking about.

TOM
That's from the C Section.

Karen stops taking inventory. She crosses her arms, angry.

KAREN
That is NOT cool.

Just then, Evie hurries in, and on seeing Karen awake, stops.

EVIE
(tentative)
Hi. It's me. Evie.

For the first time ever, Karen sees her daughter. It hits her like a ton of bricks. Karen's eyes shimmer with tears. Tender and small:

KAREN
Oh wow. I had a little girl.

Evie inches closer to the bed. Karen can't take her eyes off her. Soaking in every detail of her daughter. Tears start streaming down Karen's face. Evie feels awkward, guilty even.

CONNIE
Karen, honey. Are you okay?

Karen shakes her head "no." We can only imagine what must be racing through Karen's heart: the gravity of all that she's missed -- embodied in this teenage girl. Connie strokes Karen's hair.

TOM
We probably should've waited. Too much too soon.

KAREN
(through tears)
That's not it.

CONNIE
What then, honey? What is it?

A beat.

KAREN
She's...so much prettier than me.

TOM
No, no, no. Both my girls are beautiful.

CONNIE
And she's not very popular. If that helps.

KAREN
It does. Yeah. It helps a little.

EVIE
Dude, I'm the geek with the Coma-Mom. So. Not a ton of friends.

KAREN
You're not just saying that to be nice?

EVIE
I have a four-point-o, and I play the oboe.

KAREN
I might make you prove it. But okay.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. MCNEIL HOUSE - NIGHT

A split level ranch that could use a coat of paint. Evie helps Tom lug a worn-out La-Z-Boy recliner to the curb.

EVIE
No offense, but I wish we were rich so I could do a year abroad.

TOM
Nah. You're gonna love the den. I did all my best thinking in there.

EVIE
But now you won't have a place to think.

TOM
I still got my duck blind. Besides, we're all going to have make a few sacrifices.

EVIE
I know, but --

TOM
-- Hey. Peanut, it's gonna be okay. Weird for a while? You bet. Your mom's gonna be in one those motorized wheelie-deals for a while, and I'm guessing there's gonna be a lot of popsicles and babyfood involved.

EVIE
(dead inside)
Awesome. But I'm. I'm in the way.

TOM
(looks in her eyes)
Hey. Hey. There's room in my house and my heart for both of you.

EVIE
It's not you I'm worried about.

CUT TO:

INT. MCNEIL HOUSE, EVIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Euphoric from the miracle, Connie transforms Evie's room to the way it looked when Karen lived there. She never stopped believing, saving every scrap: The walls are plastered with posters of "Melrose Place," and "Friends," and the band "No Doubt." Magazine pics of Kurt Cobain and Eddie Vedder.

We drift into the hall, where Evie's clothes and debate medals, oboe, and music stand, books, shoes and computer are heaped on the floor beneath a PORTRAIT of the Madonna cradling the infant Jesus.

Evie weaves in and out of her belongings and enters her room as Connie smooths a tie-dyed bedspread on the bed.

CONNIE
(brimming with tears)
I don't know if my heart has ever been this full.

EVIE
Yeah. It's kind of a lot.

Evie goes to Karen's dresser, picks up a bottle of hideous 1990's perfume. She spritzes it, and ducks from the mist.

EVIE
Maybe we should call a priest or a therapist or, like, Dr. Phil --

Connie turns around slowly, awestruck, taking in her handiwork: The clunky, dusty Sony Trintron, the box of mix-tapes, the VCR and VHS tapes: "Pretty Woman," "Clueless," "Swingers," etc.

CONNIE
-- No. It's perfect the way it is.
(then)
Okay. We're ready for Snowball.

EVIE
Snowball?

CONNIE
By the window. Let's put him on the bed.

Evie looks to the window, where Karen's dead TAXIDERMIED WHITE CAT is curled up in a box. Evie hands Connie the cat.

EVIE
-- Yeah, but it's <u>not</u> 1997. And, whatever, she should totally have her room back.
(MORE)

EVIE (CONT'D)
But...not like this. This is bonkers. Like if spooky and delusional had a baby, it would look like this.

CONNIE
I'm being a mother, Evie. It's what we do. It's called *love.*

EVIE
I'll take your word for it. Considering I've never had a mother.

Ordinarily, Connie would be stung. But not tonight. At long, long, last, her baby is coming home. Evie exits, we follow her into the hall. Evie keeps moving, but we rest on the image of Madonna and Child.

CUT TO:

INT. TOM MCNEIL'S DEN / EVIE'S NEW ROOM - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Dim, not dark. Evie lies awake in bed. We're able to make out the wood paneling, the gun rack, Evie's possessions in neat piles, and a STAG'S HEAD mounted on the wall.

DISSOLVE TO:

MORNING, EVIE'S POV:

The glassy, brown eyes of the stag stare down at her.

EVIE
(grumpy, to no one)
Hello, Hell.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL, DR. WONG'S OFFICE - DAY

Karen is in a motorized wheelchair, flanked by Connie and Tom. Courtesy of Connie, Karen sports acid washed jeans, Doc Martins, and her faded "Bikini Kill" T-shirt. Her hair is in a high-pony, bound by a scrunchee. Dr. Wong lays it out:

DR. WONG
There's nothing in the literature, no case I've ever heard of --

CONNIE
-- Because it's a miracle.

Karen puts a CD into her Sony DiscMan.

KAREN
I'm a miracle. Discuss.

She puts the foamy headphones on, hits "play," and smiles.

TOM
We want to know if it's permanent.

DR. WONG
Hard to tell. Miracle aside --

CONNIE
(sharp)
-- Hey. Respect the miracle.

DR. WONG
Realistically, we need to manage our expectations. I recommend six months in a rehab, someplace that provides physical and psychiatric assistance to help her adjust --

Even though Karen's wearing headphones:

KAREN
(loudly)
I can hear you. No rehab.

DR. WONG
The world has changed considerably.

TOM
No disrespect, but we lost her for seventeen years. We'll take our chances.

DR. WONG
We're talking no solid food, and a wheelchair accessible environment until she gains the strength to walk -- if, in fact, she ever does.

Connie stands up.

CONNIE
You think I won't strap her to my back and carry her around if I have to? That's my baby. And this time, I'm not leaving without her.

CUT TO:

INT. TOM AND CONNIE'S TAHOE - DAY

Karen's motorized chair is in the back. Karen rides shotgun. Connie sits in the backseat. Karen looks out the window at the desolate landscape with the satisfied air of a paroled prisoner.

KAREN
The Wong is wrong. He made it sound like jet-packs and robots. Looks the same to me. What's the big deal?

TOM
Well, for starters, we have a black president.

KAREN
Oprah! Called it. Check.

CONNIE
It's not Oprah. But here's one: marijuana's legal.

KAREN
(jazzed)
Shut. Up.

CONNIE
And the internet. Internet's huge.

KAREN
Is that a band?

TOM
We'll let Evie explain it.

CONNIE
Oh, and honey, I should warn you: Snowball died.

Karen makes a sign of the cross. Tom searches for good news.

TOM
Hey, how 'bout this? The lesbians across the street?

TOM & CONNIE
Married.

KAREN
Like with a *wedding* wedding?

TOM
Yep. And Jim Hickey too. Hickey's married.

KAREN
(appalled)
He is way too young.

CONNIE
Thirty-five's not that young.

TOM
He came to the hospital everyday until Evie was born, and then, well, she wasn't his, and I guess --

Karen shuts down a little...

CONNIE
-- Tom, now's not the time.

NAVIGATION SYSTEM
Turn left in one hundred feet.

Immediately reinvigorated, Karen actually applauds.

KAREN
Holy crap! Talking cars. Totally worth waking up for. Do it again.
(a long beat, then)
I'm a mom.
(then)
And Hickey's thirty-five. Wow.

CUT TO:

INT. OTTERWAX HIGH, JIM HICKEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Hickey sits at his desk. Pondering whether or not to open the 1997 Otterwax yearbook in front of him. A class BELL RINGS throughout the school. We drift backwards, into the:

INT. OTTERWAX, HALLWAY - CONTINIOUS

Banners for tonight's Homecoming Dance hang high on the wall. Students migrate to their lockers, among them Evie. She's swapping out text books. A few lockers down, LIAM, 16, a cool, indie-boy, is doing the same.

A PASSING STUDENT calls out to Evie.

PASSING STUDENT
Big ups on Student Council, McNeil.

EVIE
Thanks!

LIAM
Dude, no one else even ran.

EVIE
So what?

LIAM
So, *nerd*, no one wanted the job.

EVIE
Well, guess what, douche-canoe?
It's still a win.

Liam shuts his locker.

LIAM
Some of us have lives.

EVIE
And some of us have futures.

He sidles up to Evie's locker, works the indifference angle.

LIAM
So you're not going to Homecoming?

EVIE
And miss out on the spray tans and
fake lashes? Bro's in rapper swag,
chugging Boones til they puke at
the foot of some crap-attack DJ?
Really, Liam? I took a shift at
Perkins' to *avoid* Homecoming.
(then)
Plus, my mom's coming home. Yay,
freak-show.

She leaves. He calls after her, he's sincere:

LIAM
Congrats on the mom thing!

As she passes Hickey's office. We push inside...

INT. HICKEY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Dude's a mess. He finally found the stones to open the yearbook: pics of him and Karen slow-dancing, Karen cheerleading, and then he settles on the dedication page: "*In Loving Memory of Karen Ann McNeil and Matt Plunkett.*"

MATCH TO:

INT. MCNEIL HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Karen, in her chair, has her yearbook open to the same page.

KAREN
Oh my god. They dedicated it to Plunkett, who totally died of leukemia. And to me, who did NOT die. What a jug of rude. It's like murder.

Connie enters with a bouquet of popsicles.

CONNIE
We have lots of flavors.

KAREN
(takes popsicle, realizes)
Heather Bates! Heather Bates did this. Remember how much she wanted Hickey? Me dead? She wishes.

Connie has her own popsicle, on the couch opposite Karen.

KAREN
(shows Connie pic)
And my hair! Look! Look how gross!

CONNIE
I think you look pretty.

KAREN
Classic Heather. Yearbook Nazi. Straight-A-Student-Council-Kiss-Ass.
(dawns on her)
Whoa. That's who Hickey married, isn't it? Top-notch hose-baggery.

CONNIE
(avoiding, re: popsicle)
The banana is terrific.

The doorbell RINGS. Connie opens the door. It's HEATHER BATES HICKEY (34), popping with small-town polish and a smidge of condescension. And a huge spread of flowers.

HEATHER
I heard about the miracle and had to see for myself!

CONNIE
Heather! Come on in. Look who it is, hon!

Heather enters, Connie takes the flowers to the kitchen...

KAREN
Oh wow, Mrs. Hickey. Big surprise.

HEATHER
Karen McNeil. My gosh, you look so the same. Except for the chair.
(noticing, excited)
Oh! The yearbook!

KAREN
Yeah, thanks for picking the worst picture ever. And also: not dead.

HEATHER
Can I just tell you how happy everyone is to have you back!?

KAREN
Who's everyone? We didn't hang with the same people --

Heather takes the yearbook, starts reminiscing...

HEATHER
-- Look how young we were. Adore.

KAREN
Heather. We were never friends.

HEATHER
I know, but so much time has passed.

KAREN
Maybe for you. Thing about a coma? You pick up right where you left off. We're not friends.

HEATHER
I never stopped praying for you.

KAREN
Yeah, praying I'd die.

CONNIE
(from kitchen)
Karen, honey. Heather came all this way.

KAREN
(calling back)
Those are funeral flowers! She came to gloat about Hickey.

HEATHER
Not at all. In fact, Jim and I came together over our shared sense of grief after losing you.
(reaches for wallet)
Would you like to see our kids?

KAREN
Did you name any of them after me?

HEATHER
We did not.

KAREN
Then no.

HEATHER
(cheerful, rising)
Well, I have to get to tennis.
(heading for door)
But I wanted to stop by and suggest a little get-together brunch with the girls at the club -- when you're feeling better.

KAREN
I feel fine.

Heather tosses Karen a "pity" look, implying Karen looks less than fine. And leaves. Connie enters.

KAREN
Did you see how old she looked?

Karen puts her chair in gear and cruises toward her room. Connie starts to follow.

KAREN
(calling back)
Don't follow me!

INT. KAREN'S ROOM - A MINUTE LATER

Karen sits with a mirror in her lap. She's afraid to turn it over. She sucks it up, picks up the mirror and takes her first real look at herself. A good, long stare...

...And hurls the mirror out the window.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. MCNEIL HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Karen has parked herself at the picture window, looking out. Connie enters with a load of fresh laundry.

CONNIE
Still trying to get a look at the gay ladies?

KAREN
Huh-uh. I'm waiting for Evie.
(then)
Thank you for taking such good care of her.

CONNIE
Oh, sweetheart...

KAREN
(apprehensive)
What if I suck at this?

CONNIE
At being a mother? You'll do great.

KAREN
Yeah, and how many goldfish did I starve to death?

CONNIE
That's on all of us, honey.

CUT TO:

EXT. MCNEIL HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - A MINUTE LATER

An OVERHEAD SHOT of Evie smiling up from her giant campaign sign, which is bungeed to the top of the RAV-4. She pulls into the driveway.

INT MCNEIL HOUSE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Karen's still at the window. Connie's folding laundry on the couch.

KAREN
You gave her my car?!

CONNIE
Nobody gave anybody anything. We're letting her drive it. It's still your car --
(then)
-- Now, when she gets inside, we need to congratulate her. She ran for Student Council. And won.

KAREN
That's gonna make it really hard for me to bond. You know that, right?

Evie enters. It's weird and quiet as Connie and Karen look at her.

EVIE
What?

CONNIE
(trying to contain pride)
Congratulations, Madam President!

KAREN
Ditto.

CONNIE
(to Evie)
Are we excited for Homecoming?

Before Evie can say anything, Tom enters from the kitchen in his work clothes, unwrapping a popsicle.

TOM
Hi, monkey!

KAREN
Hey, dad.

EVIE
Hey, dad.

EVIE
Awkward.

KAREN
Definitely.

TOM
(to Evie)
Heard you won.

KAREN
(trying, to Evie)
Uhhh, I'm proud of you?

EVIE
Thanks. But no one else ran, so --

KAREN
Still a win.

EVIE
(an uneasy beat)
Okay. Um. I need to go get ready.

Evie heads for her new room. Connie looks at Tom, giddy:

CONNIE
Homecoming.

CUT TO:

INT. EVIE'S NEW ROOM - A MINUTE LATER

Evie is only half-dressed, changing into her waitress uniform. Karen wheels in. Evie covers herself quickly.

EVIE
You can't just barge in.

KAREN
(on seeing uniform)
That's what you're wearing?

Evie doesn't answer. She buttons her polyester dress.

EVIE
(firm)
Who's my dad?

A beat. Karen is caught off-guard.

KAREN
That's a hard question. I, I don't remember.

EVIE
You remember Luke Perry, but you don't remember who my dad is? I've only waited my whole life, but hey, no bigs.

KAREN
I was seventeen.

EVIE
Yeah, well, so am I.

Pissed, Evie fastens her name tag to her Perkins' uniform and blows past Karen. Karen does a horrible three-point-turn in her chair, trying to follow Evie. *Son of a bitch!!*

But Evie's already at the end of the hall. Karen only gets as far the Madonna and Child picture. She yells after her:

KAREN
I don't care how much time has passed, you can't wear that to a dance!

EXT. MCNEIL HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - A MINUTE LATER

Tom finishes removing Evie's giant, lumbering campaign sign from the roof of her car. Evie opens the drivers' side door.

EVIE
(re: sign)
Thanks, daddy.

TOM
You bet. And if I haven't said it already, I'm proud of you, Evie.

EVIE
(getting in car)
It's not that big a deal, I was the only one running.

TOM
I'm not talking about Student Council.

EVIE
Oh. Well, thanks, I guess.

She closes the door.

INT. MCNEIL HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Connie ladles broth into bowls for herself, Tom and Karen.

KAREN
You guys can eat regular food, you know. We don't all have to --

CONNIE
-- I thought it would be nice for your first night home.

KAREN
(out of nowhere)
Evie asked me who her dad is.

Connie and Tom are dying to know, but try to play it cool.

CONNIE
And what did you tell her?

TOM
Is that so?

KAREN
That I don't remember.

TOM
How'd she take it?

KAREN
Pretty uptight. She seems a little...virginy.

CONNIE
And we'd like to keep it that way. We had you when I was seventeen.

TOM
Your mom wore a maternity dress to prom. We're hoping to break the cycle with Evie.

CONNIE
When she was a baby and I'd take her out in the stroller, everyone thought she was mine. I was only thirty-four. A lot of gossip. Half the town still thinks I stepped out on Tom and got knocked up in Acapulco.

KAREN
This is very Melrose Place.

TOM
Took a lot of crap at work.
(then)
Hey, you know what I'm dying to know? When you were in that coma, did you see God? Or angels, or dead relatives --

CONNIE
-- Was there any part of you that could hear us when we talked to you?

KAREN
Total blank. Last thing I remember is lying on Hickey's lawn, so wasted I couldn't move, and the world was turning and I thought: If I lie here long enough, our driveway will come by, and I'll be home.

TOM
And here you are.

CONNIE
I don't know if this helps, but there was a boy in the beginning. He used to sit by your bed. Mexican, I think.
(Karen gets very still)
Anyway, he'd sing to you in Spanish. Very quiet. Your dad I always thought maybe --

TOM
-- Who cares if he sang to her? What kind of dirtbag thinks it's okay to slip it to a girl who's hopped-up on God-knows-what?

KAREN
(firm)
He's not a dirtbag. His name's Joachim Santiago, and he looked like Slater from "Saved by the Bell." I was totally sober. It wasn't until <u>after</u> that I got wasted.

Connie and Tom are stunned. Unbearable silence. Then:

CONNIE
Well, I don't know about you two, but I'm full.

Connie starts clearing bowls.

INT. KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Connie is loading the dishwasher. Karen wheels in.

KAREN
Do you believe in love at first sight?
(MORE)

KAREN (CONT'D)
(nothing from Connie)
Do you want to know or not?

Connie stops loading the dishes and turns, ready to listen.

KAREN
He and his sister picked apples --

CONNIE
-- Migrant workers.

KAREN
Exactly! But I just thought he was an apple picker. I didn't know he'd have to leave --

CONNIE
That's what migrant means, Karen.

KAREN
Fine. Everyone knows all words except me. Suddenly it's beet week in North Dakota. And I'm losing the nicest, most perfect person ever -- three days after I met him. What if I never see him again? What if the only guy who ever loves me is Hickey? And that's when I went on the bender.

CONNIE
Now, hang on. You and Jim loved each other.

KAREN
It was never going to be the same.
(then, warmly)
I thought I'd never ever see Joachim again. But when I look at Evie, he's all I see.

CUT TO:

INT. PERKINS' RESTUARANT - NIGHT

Like a fancy Denny's, booths are jammed with Evie's dressed-up classmates, soaking up their booze with pancakes. She quietly serves plate after plate to the large, raucous group. She's invisible to them.

ANGLE on the front door: Liam enters alone, with a corsage. He looks around. Spots Evie. He walks up to her. She's silent as he pins the corsage on her uniform.

LIAM
Happy Homecoming, nerd.

She watches him exit. Okay, so maybe he's not a total knob.

CUT TO:

EXT. MCNEIL DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Exhausted, Evie gets of out her car and walks to the stoop, only to see that Tom has re-purposed her campaign sign, face-up, as a ramp for Karen's wheelchair.

EVIE
Really?

Evie enters the house, but we stay outside, and shift our gaze down the block, where a LEXUS SUV is parked, lights off. Inside the car: Jim Hickey, sad, curious, and still devoted.

INT. MCNEIL HOUSE, KAREN'S ROOM - SAME

Out of habit, Evie accidentally enters. Karen's in bed.

EVIE
(backing out)
Oops. Sorry.

KAREN
Wait! No. Come in.

Evie enters cautiously, sits on the extreme edge of the bed.

KAREN
Sorry they made you move out of your room.

EVIE
It was yours first.

KAREN
Do you, do you like your name?

EVIE
It's better than Autumn or Sienna, so -- y'know, yeah, it's fine.

KAREN
Well, if you ever want to change it, I'm your mom. I have the power to give you any name you want.
(MORE)

KAREN (CONT'D)
(then)
Is that pushing it?

EVIE
(yes)
No. I should probably go to bed though.

KAREN
I'm bad at this, I know. On top of which, I already lied to you and --
(off Evie's look)
-- If you'll let me, I want to tell you about your dad.

EVIE
Listening.

KAREN
His name's Joachim. And he was only in my life for a couple days. And if you're thinking: "Ooh, dag on you: that's slutty," it's the complete opposite. 'Til the day I die, seriously, love of my life.

EVIE
So I'm not the product of irresponsibility, bong hits and extreme drunkenness?

KAREN
No. You are made of the most special and amazing time in my life.

EVIE
What's his last name?

KAREN
Santiago.
(wistful)
I wonder what became of him.

EVIE
(brightly)
Let's Google him!

KAREN
No idea what that means, but I'm in.

TIME CUT:

A few minutes later, Evie, in pajamas, is in bed with Karen. Evie's got her iPad. Karen is absolutely blown away by its sheer magic.

KAREN
What the hell am I looking at?

EVIE
I know, right?
(typing)
Joachim Santiago. Annnd...images.

Karen picks him out immediately. Gasps. Clutches Evie's arm.

KAREN
Oh my god, there he is!

Evie enlarges the picture of Joachim. A professional head shot -- the owner of an insurance company. Extra gorgeous.

EVIE
That's my dad!

KAREN
(re: iPad)
This is so far past "The Jetsons." You can laugh, but I nearly peed when the car told us where to turn.
(back to the iPad)
What else can it do?

EVIE
(starts typing)
Should we see where he lives?

KAREN
How is that even possible? You don't understand. I thought he was gone forever.

EVIE
Holy crap. Fairfax Green. Two towns over. Look.

ON iPAD: a Google Map pic of a McMansion in a gated community.

KAREN
I've never been happier for anyone. Ever. Like <u>ever</u>. Evie, he made it. Look what he did.

EVIE
Road trip?

KAREN
How could we not?
(then)
Who else can we spy on?

EVIE
Who do you want to see?

KAREN
Jim Hickey.

EVIE
Mr. Hickey, the Guidance Counselor? Fine by me, but I'm warning you, it'll be lame.

KAREN
Hickey's the Guidance Counselor? Hilarious.

EVIE
(typing)
This one's more of a Facebook thing. So you can really soak up the lameness.

KAREN
Facebook.

EVIE
Kind of a never-ending yearbook invented to make your life look liveable.
(then)
Here. Hickey.

ON iPAD: Evie swipes through various shots of Jim and Heather and their grade-schoolers in matching, preppy clothes.

KAREN
Go back to the kids.
(Evie does, then)
Here's the thing. The wife came over today, and there was no way I was gonna give her the satisfaction of looking at pictures of her kids
(off Evie's look)
Hickey and I were a thing. For two and a half years.

EVIE
Ewww!

KAREN
I'll have you know, back in the day, Hickey was the shiznit.

EVIE
Shiznit? No one says that anymore.

KAREN
My bad.

EVIE
Yeah, they don't say that either.

KAREN
Ooh. Can we see Luke Perry?

We push through the window, up and out to the night sky, where a PIGEON is flying, over Hickey's car, and toward...

EXT. TWO-LANE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The traffic light from the opening sways gently in the wind. The pigeon slows its flight and nestles back into its nest.

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

INT. KAREN'S ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

It's past 3 AM. Karen and Evie are still at it. Karen's trying to catch up on the world.

KAREN
Not nuts about Eddie Vedder with a ukulele.

EVIE
No one is.

KAREN
Let's do Princess Di.

EVIE
Car crash. Dead.

KAREN
No!

EVIE
Yeah. Sorry.
(then)
Hey! Wanna see Oprah?

KAREN
Definitely.

Evie fires up the keyboard. A million pictures come up.

EVIE
So. She got really fat. And then super thin. But she put it all back on. No surprise. So she lost a ton of weight all over again, and then, here she is fat again, and now she's --

KAREN
-- This is making me tired.

EVIE
I know. Me too.

Evie powers down the iPad, rendering the room dark, as they drift to sleep, with Snowball at the foot of the bed.

END OF PILOT