MURDER IN MANHATTAN

"Pilot"

Written by Maria Maggenti

Network 3rd Draft

January 17, 2013

DarkFire Television

©2012, ABC Studios. All rights reserved. This material is the exclusive property of ABC Studios and is intended solely for the use of its personnel. Distribution to unauthorized persons or reproduction, in whole or in part, without the written consent of ABC Studios is strictly prohibited.

ACT ONE

INT. UPPER WEST SIDE SHRINK'S OFFICE - EARLY MORNING

Your classic West End Avenue shrink office -- worn velvet couch, overcrowded bookshelves, flokati rug, African art. BLYTHE SUTTON (mid-60s) glamorous, sophisticated yet surprisingly down to earth sits across from preppie DANIEL (late 30s) and sassy, voluble LEX(30) brilliant at everything but her own life.

This looks like couples counseling and at mid-session the room tingles with tension.

LEX
...Communicate more, be more organized, return phonecalls in five seconds, be great at our relationship, learn how to cook, read more, exercise more. Do something with my hair. Oh! And get more sleep, evidently I look tired all the time. It's like a headache that never goes away, non-stop unrealistic expectations--

BLYTHE
(nodding, interested)
Expectations...That certainly does sound exhausting.

Lex turns her attention towards Daniel who says nothing and has a neutral look on his face.

LEX
(to Daniel)
Oh my god! Why am I the only one talking? Aren't you going to say anything!??! I'm not the only one here with problems!

EXT. STREET - LATER SAME

Lex marches down the street when suddenly BLYTHE rounds the corner behind her. *What kind of shrink follows a patient down the street?*

BLYTHE
Lex! Wait!

LEX
Mom, I have four hundred things to do today!

Oh. That kind of shrink.

BLYTHE
Of course you do. Saving lives and making a difference.

They start a brisk, New York style walk and talk.

LEX
See? There it is! Your extravagant praise sets me up for *failure* --

BLYTHE
I don't see how praise equals failure. First of all, your hair is beautiful! And if you think you have to call *me* back in five seconds, that's ridiculous, I almost never answer the phone anyway. Where is all this pressure coming from? I've only wanted you to have self-confidence.

LEX
The subtext is "be perfect".

BLYTHE
You are perfect! You're adorable and talented and brilliant, I don't understand why you don't see that. And I'm not *that* extravagant.
(beat, to herself)
Am I?

LEX
Then there's *Bart*. The golden one.

BLYTHE
Oh, don't be ridiculous. You and your brother are both golden. You're both caring, original, beautiful, interesting and accomplished. I tell people all the time that my son is an assistant district attorney and my daughter works in the Mayor's office. All the time. I love you both equally.

LEX
You just did it.

BLYTHE
Did what?

LEX
(almost laughing)
The praise!

BLYTHE
Oh, I did not.
(breaks into smile)
That was just me being honest.

Lex's cell phone rings. She picks up.

LEX
(into phone)
Lex Sutton. Oh, hey Jim, thanks for getting back to me--.

BLYTHE
(interrupting)
Oh! Quick reminder --

LEX
(into phone)
One sec, Jim--

BLYTHE
--you're in charge of cake and flowers for your brother's wedding anniversary so please let's try to make that a priority this week. I suggest you start at Glaser's bakery. We can talk flowers later.

She gives Lex a kiss on each cheek and she's off! Leaving Lex wondering how it is that her mother always gets the last word.

EXT. PARK AVENUE - SAME DAY LATER

Blythe walks down Park Avenue greeted by DOORMEN all along the street. She warmly returns all greetings that come her way.

Suddenly she comes upon **FLASHING POLICE LIGHTS** and **A COVERED BODY being wheeled out** of a fancy building. She stops short and turns to the doorman ORLANDO (50s), portly, friendly, blunt.

BLYTHE
Orlando, wha...?

ORLANDO
Apartment 10A.

BLYTHE
Laura??

ORLANDO
(in a whisper)
Killed herself.

BLYTHE
What? But we're meeting for lunch today, that's why I'm here! Is Mary upstairs? Is Sonya there?

ORLANDO
Sonya came in this morning, she found the body. Mary stayed out all night, like usual.
(he shakes his head)
I know Ms. Sutton, it's a tragedy.

They watch the POLICE hustle and bustle out of the building, the white marble lobby illuminated by the flashing red lights.

BLYTHE
I should talk to Sonya.

Orlando hesitates.

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
The police are gone aren't they? It's not a crime scene is it?

ORLANDO
I don't think so--

She walks towards the elevator.

BLYTHE
(smiling)
I'll just be a minute.

INT. LAURA BARKET APARTMENT - KITCHEN

Blythe sits with the housekeeper SONYA (Russian, 40s) who sobs through the details.

SONYA
(thick accent)
I come in. I make coffee. I make to Mary's room, very messy as the usual. I go to Laura. Knock. Knock. Nothing. I am to inside bedroom, and--
(choking back her horror)
--her arms out like this on bed, she is cold.

BLYTHE
(serious, focused)
Why did the police say it's a suicide? Did anyone find a suicide note?

SONYA
No note. Pills.

INT. LAURA'S BEDROOM - LATER SAME

Blythe enters Laura's bedroom, closes her eyes and takes a deep breath. These two moved in the same circle for many years, there's emotion here.

The bedroom is understated but sumptuous - canopied bed, chintz side chairs. Very old-fashioned Upper East side. Sunlight glows behind the drapes. Blythe opens her eyes.

BLYTHE
Well! How do you like that?! She redecorated and didn't even tell me!

Blythe zooms in on the details, boom, boom, boom, like snapshots: EMPTY BOTTLE OF SLEEPING PILLS, HALF-EATEN DINNER ON A TRAY, BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE.

She moves in to examine the sleeping pills and starts to squint. She grabs a pair of READERS EYEGLASSES that are on the bedside table and puts them on. NOTE: they are distinctive with a tiny gold turtle on the hinges; not the kind you get at the drugstore. But Blythe doesn't notice because she's examining the pill bottle.

Her eye is drawn to the New York Times Sunday crossword puzzle on the floor next to the bed. Boom! *EVERY CLUE HAS BEEN ANSWERED.* She looks more closely and notices that some of the answers are in BLUE INK and some in BLACK INK. And the handwriting isn't consistent...boom!

Blythe pulls out her iphone. She taps the screen and frowns.

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
(exasperated)
Stupid thing! Stop calling people, just take a picture!

INT. MAYORS OFFICE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS - LATER SAME DAY

The Mayor's office of Community Affairs is a bustling 24/7 operation dominated by the young, ambitious and energetic.

INT. LEX'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Lex is on the phone with an elderly constituent.

LEX
Hi Mrs. Genya. I'm submitting your petitions today.
(MORE)

LEX (CONT'D)
No, they can’t change the bus route without community input. I’ll make sure you can still get to your sister’s house! Don’t worry! Okay, Mrs. Genya. Take care of yourself. I’ll call you on Thursday.

She hangs up. Her WORKMATE VICKY (30s, Latina) pokes her head over the cubicle.

VICKY
Bingo and pierogis Genya? Bay Ridge?

LEX
Eighty years old and takes the bus to see her seventy year old sister for dinner every Sunday. I promised I would do everything I can but Transit said it has to drop half the bus lines in her area because of budget cuts.

VICKY
Where there’s a will, there’s a --.

Suddenly there’s a friendly commotion in the office.

ANGLE ON

BLYTHE has arrived. Blythe makes her way through the office with sprinkles of *hellos, how are yous?, what a wonderful suit, congrats on passing the bar!*

INT. LEX’S OFFICE - LATER SAME

Blythe sits on Lex’s desk with her legs crossed as if she were sitting on a grand piano.

BLYTHE
Laura Barket did not kill herself. It was foul play. I know it.

Lex leans back in her chair with the Rubik’s cube in her hand.

LEX
Mom. You see that little blackberry I carry around all the time? It’s because I work in the Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit. I get updates from every precinct, a shooting, a domestic dispute, dog crap on the sidewalk. I got the report, it’s a suicide.
(MORE)

LEX (CONT'D)
I'm sorry especially because we all knew Laura and her family but you just have to trust the system.

BLYTHE
Only someone born in the 1980s would say that. Honey, I love New York's finest but sometimes they just get it wrong. We have less than a week to figure out what happened before it's 'case closed'.

LEX
Mom. We don't figure out what happened when people die. That's not our job.

BLYTHE
The police thought Carole Dempsey died of cardiac arrest. We're the ones who nailed her husband--

LEX
That was a fluke situation from six months ago and it doesn't mean that we can or should do it again! And I only got involved because you twisted my arm!

BLYTHE
There are times, dear, when *murder* is the only explanation. And don't lie, you loved figuring that one out.

Abashed, Lex continues fiddling with the Rubik's cube.

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
There are two kinds of evidence, physical and emotional. Right now the emotional evidence says Laura had no reason to end her life. First, she redecorated. Second, we had a lunch date planned for today and she said she had big news.

LEX
Although I'm the first to admit that you're a great lunch date Mom, that might not be enough if Laura was ready to kick the bucket.

BLYTHE
Laura wasn't unhappy.

LEX
(sighing)
Let's take a step back, keep our emotions in check--

BLYTHE
You think that because Larry was murdered I see every death as a murder.

LEX
Well, yes. He was a wonderful second husband and a great step-dad --

BLYTHE
And Larry's killer is behind bars and it was all three years ago and now I'm with Bill, so what's your point dear?

LEX
It took you a long time to accept everything that happened and I feel like your obsession with *that* case could explain why you got us involved in the Dempsey case--

BLYTHE
(gleeful)
You just said 'case'! Updo the fotos I took.

Blythe peremptorily hands her iphone over.

LEX
(petulantly)
It's *upload* not *updo.*

ANGLE ON

Photos on the computer screen: champagne, half-eaten dinner, pill bottle, crossword puzzle...

BLYTHE
Romantic food and drink in the bedroom. Very important.

LEX
(looking at the photos)
What's romantic about that half-eaten dinner on a tray?

BLYTHE
It's from Le Bilboquet! And look at the crossword puzzle.
(MORE)

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
In all the years I knew Laura Barket she never finished a crossword puzzle and I know because she told me because I told her that I can't finish one either although both you kids can--

LEX
Actually, I can. Bart can't.

BLYTHE
And see that? Two different kinds of ink!

LEX
I finish my crossword puzzles in different kinds of ink all the time, Mom.

BLYTHE
The pill bottle. That's the doctor she started seeing a few months ago. Said he changed her life--

Lex picks up her Rubik's cube again.

LEX
These are all things that the police will investigate.

BLYTHE
These are emotional clues that you wouldn't even notice unless you know Laura. That's our advantage.

LEX
This is what happened...

As we enter our **FIRST RASHOMON** THE LADIES NARRATE WHAT THEY THINK HAPPENED and we SEE THE EVENTS THEY IMAGINE UNFOLD...

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA BARKET'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - LEX'S VERSION

LEX (O.S.)
Laura was distraught...

Laura, wearing an old-lady nightgown, enters her bedroom holding a bottle of champagne. She's unsteady on her feet.

LEX (O.S.) (CONT'D)
She'd already been drinking.

Laura sits down at her vanity and picks up the sleeping pills. Looks sadly at herself in the mirror. She gazes at a FAMILY PHOTO.

LEX (CONT'D)
She's old and alone except for her adult daughter Mary who still lives at home and her son Mark who lives in Florida and is on his third marriage.

BLYTHE (O.S.)
Oh for heaven's sake, stop editorializing, you know nothing about being a woman of a certain age or having children--

Laura picks up the pills, a determined look on her face.

LEX (O.S.)
(ignoring)
It's easy, it's quick, it's something that will get rid of the pain. The pain of life just not working out as planned...

She opens the pill bottle, tips it into her mouth and chugs the champagne. She swallows and immediately looks sick. She glances at the dinner on the tray and takes a tiny bite.

She gets into bed and continues the NYTimes crossword puzzle. The puzzle FALLS to the ground...

CUT BACK TO:

INT. LEX'S OFFICE - THE PRESENT

Blythe looks at Lex and shakes her head...

BLYTHE
That's a preposterous theory--

INT. LAURA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - BLYTHE'S VERSION

BLYTHE (O.S.)
Laura was in love...

Laura dances into her bedroom wearing an oversized MAN'S SHIRT and holding a bottle of champagne. We SEE the silhouette of a MAN in the bed.

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
Her lover finished the crossword puzzle while she went and got the bottle of champagne...

LEX (O.S.)
Oh my god, Mom, come on!

BLYTHE (O.S.)
Then they got into an argument.

Laura's expression changes, upset.

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
How dare he?

We see Laura silently saying "how dare you?!"

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
Laura makes it clear. She will tell his wife about their affair.

LEX (O.S.)
Wife? What the hell are you talking about?

Laura runs to the side of the bed, picks up the phone while the two of them argue. The MAN grabs the phone and pushes Laura down on the bed.

BLYTHE
But he won't let her ruin his life--

The man opens the bedside drawer and pulls out the SLEEPING PILLS, threatening her. She throws her glass of champagne at him!

LEX (O.S.)
I didn't see broken glass anywhere--

BLYTHE (O.S.)
Oh fine!

The SCENE REPEATS, this time Laura looks fearful as the man grabs her face, pours the pills into her mouth and forces her to drink the champagne...Laura fights to keep her eyes open but loses...she shuts her eyes and --

WE CUT BACK TO:

INT. LEX'S OFFICE - THE PRESENT

LEX
Gimme a break, Mom.

Lex puts down the Rubik's cube. We NOTICE that she's SOLVED IT.

BLYTHE
Call Jack, find out what he knows.
I think this is love gone wrong.

LEX
I hate using Jack for police information.

BLYTHE
He's your dear friend, he's darling and he's a detective. It's his job.

LEX
It's not his job to share information with *me*. It makes things complicated.

BLYTHE
Well, uncomplicate! We have to find out what happened to Laura Barket.

LEX
(in a sing-song)
Asking for perfection...

BLYTHE
Sorry, dear. Didn't mean to.

INT. DIVEY COP BAR - THAT NIGHT

Lex is at a table typing on her computer when JACK (30ish), NYPD detective, childhood best friend, and current romantic complication, walks in.

He's got the kind of off-handed good looks and swagger that make ladies swoony. Lex is no different. He sits down.

LEX
(in a rush)
I've got a whole neighborhood of elderly people who are about to lose their local bus route so I'm kind of on overtime right now.

JACK
(reads her like a book)
So you feel weird about the other night.

LEX
What? No. I'm just trying to explain why I didn't call you back.

JACK
Just because we slept together doesn't mean our whole friendship hangs in the balance. Don't get jumpy. We're good.

LEX
I'm not jumpy. I'm here about Blythe's friend Laura Barket --

JACK
Your mom thinks every death is a murder, every lost car is stolen and every unexplained absence a kidnapping.

LEX
I know. But she didn't see crime around every corner before Larry was murdered. It's some sort of overly long grieving process. Maybe it was that sweet young Nelson turned out to be a cold blooded killer. Maybe she's never gotten over that whole chapter. Anyway, we could analyse Blythe for hours or, in my case, years but what I need right now is to get her off my case. So, was there a suicide note?

JACK
Even if there were, I wouldn't be able to tell you.

LEX
I know. You're right. Forget I asked. Seriously--

They sit for a moment, the heat between them undeniable.

LEX (CONT'D)
Listen, I should go.

She gets up and starts to walk away, doubles back, leans over and starts making out with him. Pulls away.

LEX (CONT'D)
Should I go?

Jack pulls her in for more...

INT. LOWELL HOTEL - NEXT MORNING

Lex's face is shmushed against the pillow. Her cell phone RINGS. She sleepily reaches for it and we pull out to reveal that she's in bed with Jack at the luxurious Lowell Hotel.

LEX
(into phone)
Yea...?

BLYTHE (O.C.)
The Barkets are having a memorial service today. We have to be there. Your brother's coming too--

LEX
(sleepily)
Okay.

BLYTHE (O.C.)
Are you in bed with someone?

Jack snuggles up to Lex, kissing her naked back and neck.

LEX
No. Why? Are you?

BLYTHE (O.S.)
Well if I were in bed with someone I certainly wouldn't have answered the phone.

Jack is about to say "hi Blythe!" when Lex claps her hand over his mouth.

LEX
Okey-doke, well I'm glad we cleared that up! I'll see you later, Mom!

She hangs up and pops out of bed, quickly getting dressed.

JACK
You know, three nights in this hotel probably equals a month's rent on your apartment in Queens.

LEX
(defensive)
I like hotels. They make me feel safe.

Jack pulls on his pants. His pecs are to die for.

JACK
(amused)
How long do you think it's going to take for you to get your emotional shit together, Lex?

LEX
Unfortunately longer than I thought, I think I'm about five years behind schedule.

She half-kisses him but he pulls her in for the real thing.

EXT. MIDTOWN STREET - SAME MORNING

Lex walks with her best girlfriend, tabloid journalist WINSOME BAILEY (early 30s, foxy, smart), each with a coffee in her hand. Winsome talks, walks and thinks fast.

WINSOME
You slept with him again? Did you charge-card it at an expensive hotel as well?

Lex nods, sheepishly.

WINSOME (CONT'D)
Alexandra Sutton, hearing your problems always gives me such a burst of self-confidence!

LEX
I hate this conversation.

WINSOME
You know I think your compulsive over-spending is an expression of your anxiety or maybe a coping mechanism for your anxiety. I'm sure there's a name for it. And I've had sex with lots of my male friends. It was fun! You need more fun in your life.

LEX
I don't want to ruin my friendship with him. And I have plenty of fun, Winsome Bailey.

WINSOME
I think you like him more than you think he likes you. Gotta run.
(cheerfully)
Mondo murder on Staten Island that I'm covering. Your turn for coffee tomorrow.

LEX
Same time, same place.

Quick peck on the cheek as Winsome heads into her office building.

LEX (CONT'D)
Do you ever think about anything but crime?

As she enters the revolving doors--

WINSOME
Sex!

LEX
No wonder my brother still isn't over you!

Winsome smiles as she disappears into the building.

INT. LEX'S OFFICE - SAME DAY

Lex is on the phone with a creditor.

LEX
(impatient, agitated)
Yes, I know I'm late with the payment. I know there's interest on it. Oh for eff's sake, the check is in the mail!

She hangs up then leans over Vicky's cubicle. All around them the OFFICE hustles and bustles.

LEX (CONT'D)
Who makes good cakes?

VICKY
My mom.

LEX
No, I mean, for a party. Like fifty people. But inexpensive--and takes credit cards. Oh and flowers. Do we know anyone in the flower district? I need flowers too.

VICKY
Diego Luna in the Bronx, he's got great flowers.

LEX
I'll never be able to get up to the Bronx. I have a meeting about Mrs. Genya's bus route in Bay Ridge.

DUNCAN (30s, Black) swings over. (We'll get to know him in the series. He's fluent in Mandarin)

DUNCAN
Bingo and pierogis Genya? Love her. Okay, today's mind-twister, aside from saving a bus route: *snooze alarms*.

LEX
Hold on.
(she thinks...)
Alas! No more Zzz's!

They laugh and high-five. Vicky shakes her head: nerds.

INT/EXT. LAURA BARKET APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

A coveted CLASSIC SIX with a TERRACE Laura's living room glitters with NEIGHBORS, FAMILY and FRIENDS most of whom look just like the apartment: understated, elegant, old money. A bar serves drinks, waiters carry hors d'oeuvres.

Blythe joins Lex who has a napkin full of food.

BLYTHE
Don't eat too much honey, it'll give you a stomach ache. This is a great place for us to get intel for the case.

LEX
There is no "case". I talked to Jack. Suicide.

Lex's PHONE RINGS: JACK. Blythe clocks it.

BLYTHE
Is that who you were with this morning?

Lex turns the phone off, looks at her mother.

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
Fine. See those flower arrangements? They're from Stanley's. Don't use them, they overcharge.

Suddenly distracted by laughter, they notice a HANDSOME OLDER MAN(60s) holding court with a gaggle of ladies. They look at each other, frowning.

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
What kind of man flirts at a memorial service?

LEX
Totally inappropriate.

Lex's older brother BART SUTTON (35), a young JFK, Jr. type enters the apartment and as he makes his way across the room men stop to shake his hand, ladies lean in for flirty air kisses.

Bart is handsome, easy on his feet, confident and does not take himself too seriously which makes him seriously likeable.

BLYTHE
Bart! My darling!

Bart gives his mom a kiss on each cheek. Bart's challenge is to stay above the family fray: two strong willed women with a flair for the dramatic who unwittingly drag him into situations he'd rather not deal with.

Lex adores him, relies on him and is jealous of him all at the same time.

BART
Hi Lex-Mex.

LEX
Hi Bartles.

BLYTHE
I see that Sheldon Whitaker said hello when you came in. Nice!

BART
He's just trying to get a favor from the District Attorney and thought he could use me. Nothing *behind the scenes*, Mom.

LEX
(teasing)
So no one's asked you to be Mayor yet?

BART
(teasing)
Not yet but I just got here. How're you holding up Mom?

BLYTHE
Oh I'm fine dear, I'm fine. Sad of course about Laura but it wasn't suicide. Lex agrees.

LEX
No, I don't.

BART
Mom, please let the police do their job--

A WOMAN across the room waves at Blythe.

BLYTHE
Oh! Bunny Williams. I have to say hello.

She swans off. The siblings begin one of their typical conversations, part banter, part power struggle.

LEX
(good-naturedly)
I hate that when you walk into a room everyone swoons because you're so much prettier than I am.

BART
Blythe always told us that genius lasts longer than looks so you could actually be ahead.

LEX
(sighing melodramatically)
For once...

They watch Blythe expertly make her way around the room.

LEX (CONT'D)
How does mom know so many people?

BART
Secret life we know nothing about.

Lex starts an old routine, affectionately mimicking their mother--

LEX
Life should be full of drama and art.

BART
Fire and romance.

LEX
Books and ballet.

BART
Cakes and champagne!

LEX
I need to borrow some money.

BART
And here I was thinking we were really getting to know each other.

Lex sheepishly shrugs.

BART (CONT'D)
I just gave you money last month. Talk about a secret life.

LEX
It's none of mom's business.

BART
See this is what I mean when I tell you to keep it simple. Stop overspending, talk to Mom and pull your socks up.

LEX
So you'll loan me the money?

BART
I need a drink first.

Lex gives him a hug while he shakes his head, oy.

LATER

Blythe sits on a settee with Laura's doctor, DR. JAMES RYAN (60s) and his wife SHEILA RYAN (60s). The doctor is warm but his WIFE seems cold and distant.

BLYTHE
She said you'd changed her life.

DR. RYAN
She changed *my* life. A wonderful woman.

BLYTHE
So you didn't sense anything amiss?

DR. RYAN
Nothing! She was even taking yoga, right Sheila? My wife Sheila teaches yoga at our wellness center.

Sheila barely nods.

DR. RYAN (CONT'D)
I feel horrible. How could I not have known?

Sheila gets up to go the bar.

SHEILA RYAN
(grimly)
Because you're not God, that's why.

Blythe clocks the discord.

MEANWHILE on the terrace, Laura's daughter MARY BARKET (30) runs over. Mary is perfect Park Avenue: skinny, blonde, breezily narcissistic, extremely beautiful.

MARY
Lex!

LEX
Mary, I'm so sorry about your Mom--

MARY
(sort of sad)
Thank you, sweetie. But at least we get to see each other!

INT. MARY'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Lex stands wide-eyed at the entrance to Mary's room.

LEX
Wow, Mary.

The "room" is more like a sumptuous, extravagant apartment.

MARY
Cost a pretty penny but if I'm going to live here I might as well make the best of it.

LEX
It's really beautiful.
(fishing)
So, how *was* your mom, Mary? What do you think happened?

MARY
I really have no idea, Lex. My mother and I went days without speaking and we live in the same apartment. It'll be weird to be here alone but then again, it's about time I had my own place, right?

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Blythe sought out and has made contact with Handsome Man aka GLENN ASHLEY.

GLENN ASHLEY
...what a shame that Laura didn't get a chance to introduce us.

BLYTHE
(suspicious)
Hmmm. Yes, what a shame.

GLENN ASHLEY
Perhaps I could take you to lunch. In honor of Laura?

Glenn offers his business card, Blythe takes it.

BLYTHE
Yes. In honor of Laura.

INT. LAURA'S BATHROOM - LATER

A GORGEOUS marble bath. Blythe pokes around. Opens the medicine chest and scans the shelves. No prescription pill bottles.

BLYTHE
(to herself)
Not one prescription...

Set out on the vanity in neat lacquered trays are the usual potions. Blythe picks things up and looks at them, distracted by whether or not Laura had a better skincare regimen than she does. She notes a bottle of bright pink nail polish. Hmmm. And a new perfume. She sniffs it -- delicious!

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Blythe bumps into Lex in the hallway.

LEX
Laura's friends say she's been out of the loop for awhile--

BLYTHE
I found a new perfume and a new nail polish. No pills.

LEX
And I don't know what to think about Mary. She's so...

BLYTHE
Spoiled. I'm so glad you're not like her, honey. You know what I always say!

LEX
Better to be interesting than rich.

BLYTHE
Exactly. Oh, I got that man's business card. Very suave guy. Too suave. I'll have Bart do a little background check on him.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Back in the living room, Blythe notices Sheila at the bar. Her hands shake as she takes her glass of champagne. Blythe zooms in - BRIGHT PINK NAIL POLISH. She nudges Lex.

BLYTHE
Same polish I just saw in Laura's bathroom.

Lex rolls her eyes. She nods towards a woman with a DARK BLUE manicure then holds up her own hand: a DARK BLUE manicure.

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
No need to get petty--

SUDDENLY there's a commotion from the terrace. Mark and Mary can be heard yelling at each other.

ANGLE ON

Mark holding a sheaf of papers in his hands.

MARK
Oh my god Mary! What did you do? There's nothing here but debts!

MARY
Mom said she would help me! She promised! It wasn't my fault!

MARK
Partial interest in a development in Florida owned by one of your friends? A start up in the *Bahamas*? These aren't investments, they're ponzi schemes! Mom would never have helped you pay this off!

MARY
(her voice turns harsh)
I needed that money, Mark! I needed it more than Mom did and I did what I had to do to get it!

The SHOCKED GUESTS including Blythe and Lex look at each other:...*did Mary kill her mother?*

ACT TWO

INT. FANCY Fflorist - NEXT DAY

A tabloid headline declares “DESPERATE DAUGHTER DRIVES DOYENNE TO DEATH” Byline: Winsome Bailey. We pull out to reveal Lex reading Winsome’s story in the NY POST as she and Blythe walk around.

LEX
(reading)
“...*records reveal that in addition to shady investments, Park Avenue Princess Mary Barket spent thousands of dollars a month on car services, clothes, beauty treatments and travel and charged all of it to her mother --*

BLYTHE
(interrupting)
How could someone spend that much money? And to burden her mother with debt! If there’s one thing I can’t stand it’s financial irresponsibil--

Lex rushes to shut her mother up--

LEX
“*But mother Laura Barket got her revenge by secretly putting the ten million dollar apartment that Mary thought belonged to her on the market, leaving the selfish daughter --*”

BLYTHE
Revenge?! Of course Winsome Bailey wrote that trash.

LEX
You know, I can’t tell if it’s a good mom thing or a bad mom thing that you still hold a grudge against your son’s first real girlfriend.

BLYTHE
She broke his heart as if it were nothing, I think my reaction is completely normal. I can’t believe Mary is the killer.

LEX
Or Laura committed suicide because she couldn't take Mary's behavior anymore. Which is what happened.

BLYTHE
If every mother with problem children killed herself there would be no mothers left.
(pointing)
Now look at that arrangement -- that's nice!

LEX
I think you're mad because the facts lean in my favor. Laura had stopped going to book club, hadn't been seen at the stables, some people feel she'd cut them off. And really, pink nail polish?

BLYTHE
Laura was not an adventurous person. She didn't try new things.

LEX
Mom. I love you. You're smart, insightful, vivid imagination. But--

BLYTHE
I'll concede defeat and let go of this whole thing if Laura's medical records prove that she was depressed.

LEX
And how do you plan to do that?

INT. DOCTOR WELLNESS CENTER - LATER SAME DAY

An upscale state of the art medical facility that includes Eastern and Western medicine, the Gaia Yoga center, Family Wellness, a Medi-spa etc. The ladies take it in -- fancy!

A NURSE calls Lex's name.

NURSE
Alexandra Sutton?

INT. DR. RYAN'S OFFICE - A BIT LATER

Lex sits in the doctor's well-appointed office. She discreetly scans his shelves, desk drawers, in-out box, framed diplomas, etc.

LEX
...thanks for seeing me on such short notice.

DR. RYAN
Any friend of Laura's is a friend of mine. When was your last physical?

The NURSE pops her head in.

NURSE
Sorry to interrupt but there's a Blythe Sutton here who wants a quick minute with you -- She's *insistent.*

LEX
That she is. I'll wait.

The doctor happily excuses himself and Lex is UP IN A FLASH and rifling through his filing cabinet like a master thief!

INT. DINER - LATER SAME

While Lex checks emails on her blackberry, her mother looks over the medical records.

BLYTHE
I can't believe how quickly you managed to find these, dear--

LEX
I've been organizing files since I was seven, remember?

BLYTHE
(smiling)
You were just the most magical child, creating your own little filing systems--
(squinting at a page)
For heaven's sake! I can't read a damn thing anymore!

She rifles around in her bag finds a pair of readers. **The ones she found at Laura's.**

LEX
How many pairs of glasses does a person need anyway?

BLYTHE
Ten pairs just in case you leave them somewhere which you inevitably do. You'll understand some day--

They continue looking at the files.

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
Well! I hate to rub it in but Laura was in good spirits, good health and had a lot to live for. No wonder the doctor was so upset!

LEX
Still doesn't prove murder.

BLYTHE
We need to get back into Laura's apartment for one last look-see.

LEX
"We" need to hit a community board meeting in Bay Ridge in less than an hour--

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT BLDG - LATER SAME DAY

Blythe walks into the lobby towards the doorman's desk.

BLYTHE
Good afternoon, is Orlando here?

DOORMAN
Sorry Ma'am he's on vacation this week.

BLYTHE
Oh. Do you know *where* on vacation?

DOORMAN
(unhelpful)
No. I don't.

BLYTHE
Well. Thank you for your time.
(a beat)
Tell me, the Yankees or the Mets?

INT. BAY RIDGE COMMUNITY BOARD MEETING - SAME

A community meeting is in progress - loud complaints about potholes, dog poop, etc. Lex sits on the sideline reviewing the photos of Laura's bedroom. She scrolls through her phone and stops at JACK's number. Stares at it.

Suddenly MRS. GENYA (80s, feisty) sits down next to Lex.

MRS. GENYA
I got the paperwork!

LEX
Mrs. Genya! I've been waiting for you.

BOARD MEMBER
Next agenda, the B38 bus route--

Mrs. Genya shoots up from her chair.

MRS. GENYA
Dat's us! And I got the Mayor's office with me!

EXT. FAR ROCKAWAY BEACH - DAY

Blythe picks her way along the rocks passing a bunch of GUYS fishing. It's precarious in high heels. Orlando sees her.

ORLANDO
Mrs. Sutton! What are you doing here?!

EXT. FAR ROCKAWAY BEACH - FISHING SHACK - LATER SAME

Blythe sits with a blanket around her shoulders drinking from a mug of coffee while Orlando reveals what he knows.

ORLANDO
...She and Mary were fighting that night yeah but the papers are exaggerating. Mrs. Barket had something else going on.

BLYTHE
Something else what?

ORLANDO
I didn't want to say anything because it's her private business but someone was leaving flowers and gifts for her all the time. A secret admirer. That's old fashioned romance if you ask me. And Mrs. Barket was happier. Skip in her step and all that.

Blythe takes this in.

BLYTHE
Can I ask you a big favor?

EXT. LAURA'S APARTMENT - BACK ENTRANCE

The ladies stand in the service entrance vestibule while Blythe fishes a key out of her purse.

BLYTHE
Remember when I helped Orlando's son with his law school application? This is payback.

LEX
And how'd you find Orlando on his vacation?

BLYTHE
I promised the substitute doorman tickets to the Yankees.

Lex shakes her head as Blythe puts the key in the lock.

LEX
Mom. You're a Mets fan.

INT. LAURA'S BATHROOM - LATER SAME

Blythe holds up the perfume, they both smell it.

LEX
Heavenly.

BLYTHE
Very.

Blythe points at the nail polish.

LEX
(teasing)
Oohh, what a crazy color! Pink.

Blythe picks up a fancy moisturizer.

BLYTHE
La Mer. I tried it. Didn't work.

LEX
(smiling)
Your skin is perfect Mom.

BLYTHE
Your skin is perfect.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

They look around.

LEX
You know, this room is not at all how I imagined it.

BLYTHE
I told you, she redecorated. We need more proof of a lover--

LEX
How can we have *more* proof if we don't have *any* proof. Hey, how come you never redecorate? You love interiors.

BLYTHE
I have nothing to prove anymore. Comfort is now my king.

Lex smiles.

LEX
Where's Laura's computer?

BLYTHE
Police took it. Shows what they know.

Blythe opens the desk drawer to reveal beautiful monogrammed stationery.

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
Laura would never write love letters on her computer.

LEX
(peering in)
And if she wrote a suicide note it would be on stationery as well.

Blythe nods, *yes, of course!*

LEX (CONT'D)
Alright. You take the closet. I'll take the rest of the room. Where did you find the crossword puzzle?

Blythe points to the side of the bed before walking into Laura's vast walk-in closet. Lex notes a small container of BLACK PENS. She opens the bedside table drawer and pokes around.

BLYTHE
(from inside the closet)
Laura had exquisite taste in clothes, I must say!

Lex finds a small key buried in the drawer. She tries it on the bedside drawer. No. She walks over and tries it on the desk. No.

She walks into the closet where she finds Blythe with a neatly packed open suitcase.

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
Why would someone have a packed suitcase if they were about to kill themselves? And why would it have lingerie in it? Brand new. This is for romance.

LEX
I found a key.

They try it on the suitcase. No. **SUDDENLY THEY HEAR SOMEONE IN THE APARTMENT!**

They both scramble, closing the suitcase and quickly hiding behind a bunch of clothes.

From inside the closet they can hear someone GOING THROUGH Laura's room - they look at each other, serious and terrified. Lex's phone suddenly BUZZES - JACK! She fumbles to shut the phone off while Blythe gives her the evil eye. From behind the louvered doors, we get a glimpse of a FIGURE moving around the room. The person opens the closet doors - Blythe and Lex hold their breath. Their feet are visible but look as if part of the shoe collection on the floor. They can't see through the clothes.

They HEAR the door to the BEDROOM close and they let out their breath. Lex sneaks out first. She puts her ear to the bedroom door to see if she can hear anything in the rest of the apartment.

Blythe walks out of the closet, her face serious.

BLYTHE
The suitcase is gone.

ACT THREE

EXT. UPPER EAST SIDE STREET - SAME NIGHT

Blythe and Lex walk and talk.

LEX
The suitcase is evidence of a trip and the trip was a secret? Or there's some kind of evidence *inside* the suitcase--

Blythe looks like she just opened a xmas present.

LEX (CONT'D)
Don't gloat. It's a puzzle and I like solving puzzles, that's all.

BLYTHE
Of course, dear. So, the key. It didn't match the mailbox. It didn't match the suitcase or the desk.

LEX
Safety deposit box? Post office box?

Lex's PHONE RINGS. JACK. Blythe clocks it.

BLYTHE
Are you sleeping with him?

LEX
(shuts off phone)
None of your beeswax.

BLYTHE
Well, if you are sleeping together not answering his calls is simply rude.

LEX
It's not about etiquette.

Blythe pulls out her phone and dials.

BLYTHE
(to Lex)
You overthink things.
(into phone)
Jack? Darling! I'm calling to see if you're free to come to family dinner tomorrow night, eight-ish. You are? One word: Marvelous. See you then!

She snaps her fone off.

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
He might have some important developments to share--

Lex pulls out her phone.

LEX
Winsome! Hi honey, hey do you want to come to family dinner at Blythe's tomorrow night? Yes... perfect. Oh no, you don't need to bring anything, just yourself!

She clicks off. They look at each other. Lex smiles.

BLYTHE
Touche.

INT. BLYTHE'S APARTMENT - NEXT NIGHT

Blythe's pre-war apartment hasn't been redecorated since the 1980s and it has a comfy but luxe quality - high ceilings, oil paintings, cozy couches. The kitchen is warm and old-fashioned. The dining room table is set with candles, fresh flowers, a wonderful meal that Blythe has cooked herself and the following people who ALL TALK OVER EACH OTHER:

Lex, Jack, Winsome, Bart, Bart's wife TRACY (35, high-strung, social climber); and son BEN (8, remarkably ordinary); Blythe's boyfriend BILL (60s a handsome art dealer with great taste in wine).

TRACY
...Even if it wasn't her kids, people would KILL for an apartment like Laura's--

BLYTHE
Jack, dear, can you help me with this platter?

He takes the platter.

BLYTHE
So, did you get anything from the M.E.'s office? Tox reports?

JACK
(teasing)
Is that why I'm here? Bill, does she use you for information too?

BILL
No, just sex. What would a tox screen show if the woman took sleeping pills except that the woman took sleeping pills?

LEX
I love you Bill, you really know how to cut through the shi--

Tracy looks at Lex.

LEX (CONT'D)
--the shebang.

JACK
Exactly right Bill.

BEN
Gramma, Thank you for my new Xbox.

Blythe tries not to wince at the word "Gramma".

BLYTHE
Can you say *grand-mere* Ben?

TRACY
(hurt, protective)
He likes calling you grandma. What's wrong with Grandma?

WINSOME
(winky-wink)
So you're a gamer, huh Ben? Your dad used to love games too, when we were in college together.

Tracy glares at Bart who smiles: Just Winsome being Winsome!

BART
She means video games--

Bill cheerfully refills everyone's glasses.

BILL
This is the Malbec, like velvet.

Ben points at Bill, then at Blythe.

BEN
How come you stay over at each other's houses but you aren't married?

BLYTHE
We're too old to get married.

BILL
Much too old.

BEN
But you're old enough to spend the night?

TRACY
Ben, stop asking personal questions!

BLYTHE
(sly)
We're old enough to do whatever we want.

Blythe takes a sip of the Malbec and smiles at Bill. Jack smiles at Lex. Lex looks back, "stop it!" on her face. Her phone rings.

LEX
Oh, hi Mrs. Genya.
(listens, nods)
No problem. I've got it covered.
(hangs up)
Sorry. Work.

BLYTHE
(pleased)
You work so hard, Alexandra. I love that about you.

When Blythe calls her kids by their full names, it's a high honor. Just as Lex settles into the glow of recognition, Bart unwittingly brings focus to himself.

BART
Oh, Mom, I got info on that guy.

BILL
(raised eyebrow)
"That guy?"

Bart pulls out the card to hand to Blythe and Lex intercepts it annoying Bart.

LEX
(reading the card)
*Pantheon: Imports with Genuine Class...*Genuine class? God, how tacky can you get?

TRACY
I don't see anything wrong with having some class.

Lex looks more closely - we see her mind working.

BLYTHE
Bill, he was a friend of Laura's, from the memorial service.

LEX
Haha, an anagram for Genuine Class is Alec Guinness. Like the actor.

BART
(re: Lex)
I hate that your mind works that way.
(to Blythe)
Well, without using Sudoku - like some people - I found out that the guy is single, lives in Murray Hill, has an import-export business and has no priors.

Blythe flashes a look at Lex who gets up from the table. Bart clocks it.

LEX
Mom! You want me to help with the cheese course?

WINSOME
The cheese course. It's so charming the way you serve dinner European style Blythe, I've *always* loved that.

BLYTHE
(stiffly)
Well. *Merci-beaucoup*.

Tracy glares at Winsome, angry about the reference to "always". Blythe dashes into the kitchen behind Lex.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

LEX
Laura's secret lover?--

BLYTHE
Only one way to find out--

Bart comes into the kitchen carrying plates just as Blythe and Lex are about to exit with the cheese and fruit tray.

BART
What are you guys up to? I know that look. The lawyer in me knows *that look.*

Blythe strategically plays ditz as a deflection--

BLYTHE
Darling, you're too old to be anxious when your sister and I talk, that's ridiculous.

LEX
(following her lead)
Seriously, Bart.

BART
(shaking his head)
Okay, something just went very wrong in this conversation.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They re-enter the dining room.

BLYTHE
Cheese course!

BEN
Can I see your gun Jack?

JACK
No. Sorry, buddy.

BART
Ben. You do not need to see a gun.

BLYTHE
I agree.

LEX
Me too.

BART
(riffing)
Whatever Mom says.

LEX
What's that supposed to mean? No one would want an eight year old to see a gun. Are you insane?

BILL
This camembert is perfect--

WINSOME
I love the pears--

BART
I was just joking, stop reading into everything--

LEX
Whenever I try to analyze something you get defensive.

BART
(eyes heavenward)
I can't win.

LEX
What do you mean? You win at everything that's the whole problem!

BLYTHE
Are you two drunk? What are you suddenly fighting about?

JACK
(to Ben, getting up)
Why don't you and I check out your new video game? Tracy, join in?

She does. Briskly!

BART
Mom, we're not fighting. Lex is just being sensitive.

LEX
I am not! I'm trying to point out the ways that Bart undermines me without even realising it!

BART
How can you say that when I *just* helped you once again--

LEX
Damn you Bart, shut up!

Bill starts to pick up dishes while Winsome pours more wine.

BLYTHE
(to Lex)
Lex, please don't tell your brother to shut up. What did he help you with?
(to Bart)
What is everyone talking about?

BART
Nothing Mom, forget it.

BLYTHE
I gave birth to both of you, I can tell when you're lying.

Bart looks at Lex, "tell her".

LEX
I'm in a little bit of debt, that's all.

Winsome chuckles.

BART
Lex! You spend all your money on fancy hotels and room service and then expect other people to bail you out! I bet Jack knows all about it as well.

LEX
Jack has nothing to do with anything!

JACK (O.S.)
She's right!

BLYTHE
(shocked, stunned)
Why would you need to stay in a hotel? Your apartment is darling, we painted it together--

LEX
Because Mom!

BLYTHE
Because what?!

WINSOME
She gets overwhelmed--

LEX
When I get stressed, I like to stay in a hotel!

Blythe looks at Lex as if she's crazy.

BLYTHE
Why would you do something like that?

LEX
(exploding)
Because I'm not perfect okay?! I've got issues! I've got problems! And I don't need Bart the golden asshole to broadcast them!
(almost crying)
My problems are my business!

She grabs her bag and slams out of the apartment leaving everyone stunned silent. Tracy walks into the room with Ben and Jack. She looks right at Winsome.

TRACY
And stay away from my husband!

ACT FOUR

EXT. BLYTHE'S BUILDING - NEXT MORNING

Blythe, wearing huge sunglasses, gets into a waiting yellow cab.

INT. JAMAL'S TAXI - CONTINUOUS

BLYTHE
Good morning Jamal.

The driver JAMAL (30s) is West African and studying for his PhD in biology (useful in our series when we want blood and guts information). Blythe keeps him on retainer when she wants to get around the city anonymously. Jamal clocks the sunglasses.

JAMAL
Everything okay?

BLYTHE
I don't know what happened. One minute everyone is fine, the next everyone is screaming. Here, I'm going to meet this guy.

She hands over Glenn Ashley's card. Jamal pulls out as Blythe starts an external internal monologue.

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
Maybe I do ask them for perfection. It's not as if I do it consciously. Was it being a single mother after their father walked out? Or marrying Larry and bringing them uptown? I do think Lex's hotel thing is very odd. But how sweet that Bart looks out for her...The bad news is they don't feel they can be honest with me...

JAMAL
Families are complicated.

BLYTHE
(cheerfully)
Of course they are! That's what makes them so fascinating!

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - SAME MORNING

Lex arrives at Bart's office carrying two coffees.

BART
Here comes drama.

LEX
I came to apologize but be mad at you at the same time.

BART
Tracy made me sleep on the couch so I'm prepped for female rage. Anyway, Mom's the one you need to apologize to, not me.

LEX
I already called her ten times. I'm sorry I lost my temper. I just wish you hadn't told Mom about my problems, Bart.

BART
I wish I hadn't too, believe me. But you can't borrow money from me then to lie to Mom and expect me to lie too.

LEX
It's not lying. It's just not telling. Mom's sensitive, I don't want her to worry and I don't want to hurt her. Did you talk to her?

BART
She went to see that guy. Without you.

LEX
(suddenly mad again)
What? I can't believe her! Talk about passive-aggressive. Okay, give me his info, I have to go--

BART
More drama, Lex! Mom has plenty of experience handling male admirers--

LEX
It's not that. It's--

BART
(staring)
This isn't Carole Dempsey all over again is it? You guys need to STOP--

LEX
Can we just run Glenn Ashley's name again? Please?

EXT. FIRST AVENUE - SAME

Jamal's cab pulls up in front of a modest, doorman building. Blythe gets out.

BLYTHE
No need to wait Jamal! Good luck on your chem exam!

INT. DA'S OFFICE - SAME

Bart and Lex stare at A MUG SHOT of Glenn Ashley on the computer.

BART
A. Glen Hensley, Lane Glen Shy...Ashley Glenn, Elan Genshley. These are all anagram aliases?

LEX
I knew it! Look at this, identity theft, embezzlement, financial fraud. Targets older females, mostly widows. Ohio, Nevada --

BART
This guy's been flying under the radar for a year.
(picks up phone)
Calling the police.

LEX
Calling Mom.
(into phone)
Mom! It's me! UH-GAIN! Wherever you are, leave and meet me at Bart's office!

Lex clicks off and reads off Bart's computer.

LEX (CONT'D)
Assault and battery! That's it, gimme the home address you found--

Bart tries to cover the computer screen.

BART
No! I don't want you to get involved, I called the police --

Lex snaps a screen shot with her iphone.

LEX
I can handle this!

And runs!

INT. GLENN ASHLEY'S BUILDING - LATER SAME

Blythe rings the doorbell. Glenn Ashley answers.

GLENN ASHLEY
Welcome! I'm so glad you agreed to meet me here!

He ushers her into the apartment and as he does, checks to make sure there's no one in the hallway before he closes the door.

EXT. MURRAY HILL STREET - LATER

Lex is stuck in traffic. She jumps out of the taxi and runs down the block to Ashley's apartment. No name on buzzer. She hits a bunch of buzzers. Finally a person answers.

BUZZER PERSON
Who is it?

LEX
(into buzzer)
Pizza delivery!

INT. GLENN ASHLEY'S BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Collecting herself, Lex knocks on the door, ready for anything. A surprised Glenn answers.

GLENN
Hello.

LEX
(smiling)
Hi there. I'm Lex Sutton. I believe my mother is here?

INT. GLENN ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Blythe is on the couch with a cup of tea when Lex walks in. Blythe immediately understands that if Lex is there, something's up.

BLYTHE
Alexandra!

LEX
Hi mom, sorry to butt in like this.

As they embrace --

LEX (CONT'D)
(sotto)
Wanted in three states, police are on their way.

BLYTHE
(pulling away)
Glenn was just telling me how he met Laura.

GLENN
Winter antiques show. One of my favorite events.

BLYTHE
Always a fun evening--

LEX
How sweet.
(tiny cough)
I'm sorry, could I trouble you for a glass of water?

GLENN
Of course, no trouble.

Glenn exits and the women BURST into rushed whispering.

LEX
(urgent, must go now)
Identity theft, fraud, forgery, targets older women--

BLYTHE
(urgent, must stay now)
We need to know if they were lovers. We get that, then we go--

LEX
(goddamit Mom!)
Assault and battery!

Glenn re-enters with water and a tray of snacks. Next to the snacks is a SHINY KNIFE. Lex takes this as a sign to leave now. Blythe takes it as a sign to talk quickly.

LEX (CONT'D)
Glenn, I'm sorry I have to drag my mother out of here, we have a spa thing--

BLYTHE
Did you help Laura with her re-decorating? I know you're an antiques expert.

GLENN
Laura was a very strong woman. Opinion-wise.

Lex perks up. A strong woman "opinion-wise?" what does that mean? Who is Glenn and did he have anything to do with Laura's death?

LEX
So you were in her apartment?

GLENN
Only a few times. We mostly met for coffee.

LEX
Where?

BLYTHE
How often?

GLENN (CONT'D)
A diner at Twenty-eight and Third.

Blythe puts down her tea. Lex knows this means she's getting ready for a serious talk - which is not a good thing.

BLYTHE
You never left her any gifts or flowers?

Glenn's demeanor changes, darker, colder.

GLENN
If I did, why would I tell you?

BLYTHE
Glenn, was there anything *between* you and Laura?

GLENN
(aggressive)
Absolutely not.

BLYTHE
Glenn. We don't believe Laura killed herself.

Lex starts to guide Blythe out but Glenn blocks them -- .

GLENN
We're finished talking.

A BANG ON THE DOOR! All three startle.

COPS
Police! Open up!

Lex rushes the door and flings it open.

GLENN
What is this?!

The POLICE enter, cuff Glenn.

COP
Glenn Ashley, you're under arrest. Fraud and forgery--

Glenn glares at the women as he's led out. Lex and Blythe let out a HUGE breath.

BLYTHE
Thank God, Laura didn't date him!

LEX
...Oh my god, Mom...please don't follow suspects without me! Why didn't you call me? I called you ten times!

BLYTHE
(sympathetically)
I thought you needed some space.

Lex looks down, ashamed. Blythe reads the moment.

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
Let's go check out that diner.

EXT. MURRAY HILL STREET - LATER SAME DAY

Blythe and Lex take in the four corners at 28th and Third Avenue. Diner, newsstand, beauty salon. A Mailboxes Etc. store. BINGO! Blythe pulls out the key from Laura's.

LEX
The KEY.

INT. MAILBOXES ETC. STORE - CONTINUOUS

Blythe is at the counter with the Mailboxes Clerk who is busy sorting. She suddenly seems a bit frail and addled.

BLYTHE
Hello, dear.

MAILBOX GUY
Hey.

BLYTHE
I cannot remember my mailbox number. Laura Barket. Mrs.

The Mailbox Guy looks at her as if trying to place the name and the face. Blythe gives him a sad smile. He opens a ledger and looks it up.

MAILBOX GUY
One-six-nine-five.

BLYTHE
Oh! Of course! Thank you so much.

She turns away and as she does Lex is staring at her. They walk to the mailboxes.

LEX
(in a whisper)
How'd you do that? Laura's face has been all over the papers.

BLYTHE
Sadly, some people think all old ladies look alike.

They open the mailbox. It is filled with opened envelopes, the letters still inside. The ladies look at each other: STRANGE.

Lex notices that the RETURN ADDRESS is a P.O. BOX in the exact same store a mere dozen boxes away.

LEX
(pointing)
The return address is right there...

INT. DINER - LATER SAME

The ladies sit in a booth at the local Greek diner with the letters in front of them.

LEX
...So she used the mailbox like a safety deposit box, reading them and then putting them back--

BLYTHE
And the mailbox store as a rendez-vous spot in a neighborhood where no one would know them. Unless the lover lives around here. Every letter ends with the initials E.G...

LEX
(looking over the letters)
Darling lover, woman of my dreams... There are some pretty racy passages in here.

BLYTHE
Just ignore that and concentrate on the clues...E.G...who is E.G?

LEX
A person who uses blue ink.

BLYTHE
The handwriting looks similar to the crossword puzzle but I can't be sure...

LEX
They had a trip planned, Laura redecorated to sell the apartment and they were starting a new life together. Do you think you could fake being another old person and get the letters from the return p.o. box?

Blythe frowns.

BLYTHE
We'll just have to wait and see if E.G. shows up to get the letters in that box.

INT. JAMAL'S TAXI - THAT EVENING

Blythe and Lex sit in the back seat, staking out the mailbox store. Lex briskly handles emails and texts on her phone.

BLYTHE
Mrs. Genya?

LEX
(looking up)
I love that you remember her name.
(a beat)
Mom, I'm really sorry I lost my temper at dinner. Like I've been trying to tell you, I'm not perfect.

BLYTHE
Oh sweetheart, it's okay. I can handle a temper tantrum now and then.

LEX
(tiny voice)
Well, it wasn't really a temper tantrum.

Lovingly missing the point, Blythe pulls Lex into a hug.

BLYTHE
And don't sell yourself short, you are perfect!

Over Blythe's shoulder, suddenly distracted --.

LEX
Mom! Look!

Their POV: DR. JAMES RYAN is inside the store arguing with the MAILBOX CLERK, pointing to a mailbox. But there's something else...

LEX (CONT'D)
Mom. Where did you get those reading glasses?

Blythe holds them up and looks at them.

BLYTHE
These? Actually, I found them at Laura's...

They turn back and see that the doctor **IS WEARING THE EXACT SAME KIND.**

INT. JAMAL'S TAXI - CONTINUOUS

Jamal drives. Blythe is on the phone to Bart's office.

BLYTHE
(into phone)
...Yes, tell him it's his mother.
(to Lex)
...they were on the bedside table the first morning I went to her apartment, I grabbed them without even thinking--

LEX
Mom! That could be evidence! And now it has your fingerprints all over it!

BLYTHE
(into phone)
Bart darling! Can you do a background check on Dr. James Ryan--

Blythe holds the phone away from her ear.

BART (O.C.)
Never again! Not after what happened today!

BLYTHE
(ignoring)
I'll hold.
(to Lex)
(MORE)

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
Either Laura and the Doctor were playing twinsies and bought the same pair or the Doctor left these behind at Laura's apartment. *It was a crime of passion...*

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT - 2ND RASHOMON - BLYTHE'S VERSION

Laura and the doctor ARGUE.

BLYTHE (O.S.)
Laura threatens to call Sheila and tell her everything.

Lex interrupts.

LEX (O.S.)
No. Pre-meditated. Sheila found out about the affair...

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT - LEX'S VERSION

Sheila shows up in Laura's bedroom with the love letters.

LEX (O.S.)
She confronted Laura.

Laura and Sheila argue. She sees the doctor's glasses. MORE PROOF! Sheila sees the sleeping pills. She grabs the champagne and pushes it at Laura.

LEX (CONT'D)
There's no way she's going to let go of her husband!

Sheila pulls A GUN out of her purse and puts it to Laura's head**...THE SOUND OF A PHONE RINGING pulls us out of the rashomon.**

INT. JAMAL'S TAXI - THE PRESENT

Lex's phone is ringing. She picks up.

LEX
Lex Sutton.

At the same time, Bart has come back on the line for Blythe.

BLYTHE
Really? Thank you dear. I'll call you later. No, I'll never ask again, promise. Goodbye honey!

Lex's call ends.

LEX
Mary's in jail for drunk and disorderly and she wants to talk to us.

BLYTHE
The doctor's first wife died from an overdose. Of sleeping pills.

INT. DOWNTOWN JAIL - SAME NIGHT

Lex sits with Mary.

MARY
(tearful)
Oh Lex, the night my mom died I told her I hated her and wished she were dead. And then she died! My brother was right...I really am responsible!

LEX
No, Mary, you aren't. What do you know about her doctor?

MARY
Um...nice? She was obsessed with the yoga. Gaia this and Gaia that, the yoga teacher was so great, on and on--.

Lex takes this in...GAIA...GAIA...Mary starts crying.

MARY (CONT'D)
You know, my mom was married three times and I don't think she ever loved any of her husbands. The only person she ever loved was me...and I ruined it!

INT. JAIL HALLWAY - LATER SAME

Lex and Blythe walk quickly, everything suddenly in hyper-speed.

LEX
(excitedly)
Mom, it all has to do with Gaia, see? E.G. stands for Earth Goddess, that's what Gaia means, earth goddess. E.G., get it?

BLYTHE
I'm sorry sweetie, I'm not as smart as you are.
(MORE)

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
How does Gaia-earth goddess fit in with first-wife overdose?

LEX
The love letters to Laura were signed E.G. and we thought they were someone’s initials but they’re not, they’re shorthand for Earth Goddess also known as Gaia, the name of the yoga studio. Mary said her mother never loved any of her husbands but she was obsessed with her yoga teacher. Get it?
(beat)
The yoga teacher is the doctor’s wife. It means Laura’s lover is the Doctor’s *WIFE not the doctor*.

ACT FIVE

INT. WELLNESS CENTER - OFFICE - LATER SAME

Blythe consoles SHEILA who has obviously been crying. Lex is in the background talking on her phone. Lex walks over.

LEX
Jack's on his way.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - LATER SAME

Blythe, Lex and Sheila stand in front of the Dr's desk. Blythe pulls the READERS out of her purse and places them on the doctor's desk.

BLYTHE
You left these at Laura Barket's apartment the night she died.

DR. RYAN
I have no idea what you're talking about.

LEX
Sure you do. You discovered that your wife had been having an affair.

The doctor's face drains of color...

BLYTHE
With Laura.

This time the ladies narrate in harmony.

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - BLYTHE AND LEX FINAL RASHOMON:

LEX (O.S.)
Sheila finished up the crossword puzzle for Laura...

Sheila sits on the bed sipping champagne and doing the crossword puzzle.

SHEILA RYAN
Done! In blue pen so you'll remember who's smarter!

Laura walks out of her closet with the SUITCASE. She pats it.

LEX (O.S.)
They had everything ready for their trip.

LAURA
All our things fit in this suitcase. First time in my life I'll travel with only one bag!

They laugh and Laura takes a sip from Sheila's champagne glass.

BLYTHE (O.S.)
But Sheila had to get home.

Sheila gets up to leave.

SHEILA RYAN
Tomorrow, dear.

LAURA
And every day after that...

Laura walks Sheila to the bedroom door and they share a sweet brief kiss. Sheila leaves.

BLYTHE (O.S.)
Sheila left through the back entrance of the apartment and when Laura went to get ready for bed, the back door was left unlocked.

Laura sighs happily. She walks into her bathroom to get ready for bed and when she walks out the DOCTOR is there.

BLYTHE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
The doctor got in the same way Sheila got out.

The doctor has an open bottle of champagne in his hand.

LEX (O.S.)
He was drunk, devastated. He's just found out about the affair. He told her he had to drink half a bottle of champagne just to get the guts to come and see her. He even began to cry.

The doctor sits down on the bed, shaking. Takes off his glasses.

BLYTHE (O.S.)
Of course Laura offered him kind words, assuring him that it had nothing to do with him, he shouldn't take it personally.

The doctor holds up the champagne bottle.

LEX (O.S.)
He claimed that they should let bygones be bygones.

The doctor pours some champagne for Laura. Laura takes it tentatively, almost embarrassed that she should celebrate when this man is so sad.

BLYTHE (O.S.)
He toasts her, good luck!

LEX (O.S.)
And Laura drinks that champagne because she didn't want to hurt his feelings.

Suddenly Laura starts to redden, choke, gasp for air. She mouths, "WHY? WHY?"

BLYTHE (O.S.)
Little did she know that Dr. Ryan has some experience getting rid of ladies who cross him. And he certainly wasn't going to let his wife take off with Laura. No way!

LEX (O.S.)
So add some crushed narcotics to some bubbly and the next thing you know--

Laura falls back on the bed dying as the doctor watches.

BLYTHE (O.S.)
You have a woman dead of suicide...

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - THE PRESENT

SHEILA RYAN
How...how could you kill her?

She starts to swing at the doctor, hysterically crying just as JACK and the POLICE enter the room pulling her away.

SHEILA RYAN (CONT'D)
He killed Laura Barket!

DR. RYAN
Yes I killed her! She deserved it! HOW DARE YOU THINK YOU COULD *leave me! How dare you try to humiliate me!*

Jack brings out the cuffs.

JACK
Dr. Ryan, you have the right to remain silent--

And as they lead him out, Jack looks at Blythe and Lex wide-eyed.

EXT. WELLNESS CENTER - LATER

Lex stands with Jack as the police car drives off.

JACK
I don't even know where to start--
How the hell--?

LEX
(simply)
You know Blythe. She can get anyone to talk.

JACK
You have your own charms, you know.

Best friends? Lovers? The heat between them blazes...

Meanwhile, Blythe is with Sheila.

SHEILA RYAN
I still don't understand how you figured this whole thing out.

BLYTHE
(modest, deflecting)
Oh, it was just a bunch of coincidences really. The crossword puzzle in two different inks, pink nail polish, the memorial service when I took note of how anxious you seemed. My brilliant daughter made her own connections and I realised you were grief-stricken. A feeling I recognize.

SHEILA RYAN
I know it seems crazy but I broke into the apartment one night. I took the suitcase, her perfume and nail polish...I just wanted something of hers.

BLYTHE
When we lose someone we love, we do all sorts of crazy things.

Blythe hands an envelope of the love letters to Sheila.

BLYTHE (CONT'D)
I almost forgot--

Sheila clutches the letters to her chest.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Gifts create a tower at the entrance table of Tracy and Bart's Tenth Anniversary Party. The ROOM shimmers with candles, silverware, sparkling GUESTS. And FLOWERS everywhere.

The MUSIC stops and someone yells CAKE! Lex wheels a big cake out into the room. Everyone CLAPS. Tracy and Bart glow. Blythe gives Lex a BIG thumbs up. MUSIC starts, people dance.

Lex picks up her phone and dials.

LEX
(smiling)
Jack? Hi. It’s me. Wanna get a drink later?

INT. RESTAURANT BAR - LATER SAME NIGHT

Blythe and Lex sit at the bar watching TV NEWS: “DOCTOR ARRESTED IN WIFE’S LESBIAN LOVER’S DEATH!”

LEX
So much time protecting family secrets and now it’s all unraveling in public. It’s sad.

BLYTHE
True. But you know, people keep secrets for so many complicated reasons, honey. One can’t be too harsh.

Lex leans her head on her mom’s shoulder.

LEX
Yeah, I guess you’re right. People do keep secrets for complicated reasons.

BLYTHE
(meaningfully)
How about I pay for our drinks?

EXT. BAY RIDGE STREET BUS STOP - DAY

Lex is with Mrs. Genya and a BUNCH of OLDER FOLKS. Mrs. Genya passes out around a tray of pierogis. A BUS rolls up. Everyone cheers.

INT. FEDERAL PENITENTIARY - DAY

Blythe’s PURSE is dumped out into a plastic container as she walks through a metal detector.

The click-clack of her high heels echo off the concrete floor as she makes her way down a long hallway accompanied by a Corrections Officer.

Her phone rings.

BLYTHE
Hello, darling.

LEX
Listen, don't get overexcited but a girl in one of my neighborhoods is missing. It's logged as a runaway but I'm not convinced. Dinner?

BLYTHE
I'll make a reservation.

INT. PRISON VISITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A private visiting room. Blythe sits down at a formica table and opens a HUGE FILE FOLDER.

ANGLE ON

An old cover of The New York Post, with a photo and headline: PARK AVENUE BUSINESSMAN SLAIN! It's LARRY, Blythe's 2nd husband. Blythe gazes at the photo.

BLYTHE
(softly)
Oh Larry...

CORRECTIONS OFFICER
Nelson Rodriguez. One hour visit.

The DOOR opens and NELSON RODRIGUEZ (22) a handsome, very young looking Puerto Rican man in a prison jumpsuit enters. He smiles warmly at Blythe who smiles back.

She puts on her readers. They start to review paperwork and our CAMERA PULLS OUT SLOWLY leaving these two unlikely partners...

NELSON
When are you going to tell people you're trying to find the real killer?

BLYTHE
When the time is right.

Blythe is committed to finding the truth about Larry's murder and in so doing, proves that *when we lose someone we love, we do all sorts of crazy things.*

FADE OUT. *