

GIRLFRIEND IN A COMA

by

Liz Brixius

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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

*Hellllloo?*

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. The 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 not 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 scrunchie. 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 - CONTINUOUS

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

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 after 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 out of 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 ever. 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