

GOOD GRIEF - 1x01 - Newborn

By

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TEASER

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

A light breeze sweeps the tall grass, and warm daylight slices through leafy trees into a heavenly clearing. A WOMAN (40) nuzzles a newborn in a rocking chair. She's calm - at peace.

THIS IS DESIRE PERRAULT.

But something catches her eye: a bright-red HOT AIR BALLOON in the middle of the field. She stands and slowly approaches, clutching the infant more tightly than ever.

She looks down at her baby - so innocent - and then at the basket - so empty. Finally, she kisses the swaddled infant and places it in the balloon.

Des takes a step back and the balloon begins to rise. She watches as it climbs higher and higher. Suddenly, Des is stricken with dread. She reaches for the balloon.

DES

Wait. *Wait!* I'm not ready!

But it's too late. Des falls to her knees. Her eyes never leave the balloon.

DES

Please come back...

SLOW FADE TO: BLACK

EXT. 51ST AVENUE - GOODNESS LAKES - DAWN

An ordinary street in an ordinary suburb of Goodness Lakes. In the pre-dawn glow, the cul-de-sac is majestic: the dew on neatly-kept lawns, the freshly-painted white picket fences, the chimes that TINKLE in a light breeze.

It's all so sublime, but deceptively so.

SUPER: Wednesday morning

A PAPER BOY speeds by on his bike, tossing newspapers. The front-page headline reads: "Prepare for Goodness Day 2018!"

Just then, over the horizon, a car pulls over the gentle slope, past a "No Exit" sign. Always just under the speed

limit.

Des is behind the wheel, carefree. Content. The rising sun chases the car as it continues down the long road to the end of the cul-de-sac.

She pulls into a

DRIVEWAY

And stops next to a "For Sale" sign with a "SOLD" sticker slapped across the middle. She kills the ignition and climbs out, eyeing her new home. Her new *life*.

EVERYTHING ABOUT DES IS TENTATIVE - her movements, her gaze. She is always on edge, as if one false move will blow her to smithereens.

Just then, Des' neighbor - BONNIE BARROW (45) - comes barging through the front door of her home, travel mug of coffee in hand. The screen door SLAMS behind her, and her beaded cornrows CLINK as she sways.

Bonnie's a little under-dressed in a tank and cut-off jean shorts, and the way she carelessly props her feet up on the railing is anything but modest. BONNIE IS A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH.

And then THEY LOCK EYES. An awkward silence as they size each other up, neither woman brave enough to make the first move.

It's a stalemate -

A battle that could last until the end of time.

CUT TO BLACK.

SUPER: GOOD GRIEF

END TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. DES/BONNIE'S HOME - DAY

Back to the tense confrontation.

Des finally smiles - overtaken by the overwhelming joy of seeing another human being.

DES
Hi there.

Bonnie says nothing, sizing Des up. She finally opens her mouth to speak but thinks twice, standing instead and returning indoors.

The door SLAMS behind her and Des jumps, startled.

INSERT: Des in a cold room with colors as neutral as her clothing. A door SLAMS here too, sealing her inside.

Des shakes it off and approaches Bonnie's house. She stops just short of the door.

INSIDE BONNIE'S HOUSE

Bonnie is still, silently waiting - as if she can sense Des on the other side.

BACK OUTSIDE

Des stops herself just before knocking. She backs away.

INT. DES' HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The CLICKING of a key turning a lock. The door opens and Des enters. The house is in its original, *outdated* state - suspended in time since its origin.

Nevertheless, it's home.

Des looks around. Where to begin?

A MONTAGE OF DES EXPLORING/UNPACKING.

DEN (2ND FLOOR)

1. Des powers up a brand-new laptop. She places a notepad/pen next to it, aligning everything with extreme precision.

Above the desk she pins a wall calendar (currently empty of engagements).

BEDROOM (2ND FLOOR)

2. Des examines two matching twin beds, side-by-side - just another of the house's antiquities.

She unpacks her clothes, gingerly transferring them from

suitcase to dresser and flattening out the wrinkles.

One particular cardigan catches her eye, and she holds onto this one an extra moment.

INSERT: Close on Des (ten years younger) in a hospital bed, cradling something (unseen); she looks up at at her husband, JIM (30s), beaming. She's wearing the same cardigan.

Des moves to the window and looks down on the

BACKYARD.

3. A spacious area with a small patio and lots of green. Outdoors now, Des admires a huge tree in full bloom - perfect for climbing.

KITCHEN

4. Des runs her finger along the squeaky-clean counter top. She tries the cabinets next and discovers a thin film of dust on the glassware, all turned face up. Rookie mistake.

DES
That won't do.

She loads every last glass into the dishwasher, pops in a soap tab and fires it up.

Move-in complete. Des look around - smiles, satisfied with her work. *Everything's falling into place.*

But then, Des becomes very much aware of the THRUMMING of the dishwasher. It sounds just like a HEARTBEAT.

Another MEMORY creeps up on Des:

INSERT: The same hospital room. But now we see what Des was holding - her newborn. She takes its tiny hand in hers. Feels its heartbeat.

Des wills the memory away.

DES
No.

INTERCUT between Des and Bonnie.

INT. BONNIE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUING

Bonnie stands at the kitchen island, stirring her coffee on repeat. Distracted. *Working through some inner-turmoil.*

A PHONE ALARM breaks the spell. She silences it and sets the spoon aside, stray drops pooling on the counter.

Bonnie leaves the mess behind and moves towards the living room.

DES' LIVING ROOM

Des paces, fighting to subdue the memories. *No luck.* She tries sitting. Still nothing, and her gaze is pulled back to the kitchen.

But Des catches herself instantly and rips her gaze away.

DES

Go. Away. You're not wanted.

BONNIE'S LIVING ROOM

Bonnie unlocks a small end table drawer.

Inside: a container full of cigars. Bonnie lights one and takes a long drag, savoring every moment.

DES' BATHROOM

Des stares at her reflection. *This is not an okay woman. This is not a sane woman.*

She opens a bottle of prescription medication and throws one back.

DES

10... 9...

Des retreats INTO HER MIND.

INSERT: A hot air balloon. As DES' COUNTDOWN CONTINUES, the balloon deflates. At "zero" it's completely empty. Lifeless.

Des breathes deep.

BONNIE'S LIVING ROOM

So does Bonnie - taking another drag. She's slouched in a

corner now, watching the smoke dance and twirl above her.

DES' BEDROOM

Des lies down on the neatly-made bed, clutching her pill bottle: her lifeline. As the medication starts to take effect -

- The room begins to darken. Des sinks into the shadow, the bedroom pulling further and further away until there's nothing but

BLACK.

EXT. CUL-DE-SAC - NIGHT

A view of both Des & Bonnie's homes.

SOUNDS OF A LOW-KEY PARTY raging on inside

BONNIE'S LIVING ROOM,

Where a small group of GUESTS drink and converse. AMBIENT MUSIC plays in the background. All very casual.

Bonnie's on her feet - playing good hostess.

BONNIE

You want another, Shan?

SHANNON

Sure.

BONNIE

I got you covered.

Bonnie moves into the

KITCHEN

And grabs a bottle of wine from the fridge. As she turns to head back, she sees Des through the window - eating a lonely meal in her kitchen.

Bonnie stops. Watches Des from the darkness - perhaps feeling just the *slightest* twinge of guilt.

Bonnie pulls the blinds shut.

INT. BONNIE'S PORCH - LATER

The last of the guests leave, and Bonnie makes a point of firmly locking both locks before heading upstairs.

EXT. LAKES - SUNRISE

A beautiful sunrise over the town's namesake lakes - one East, one West - each merging into one.

It's private - *beautiful*. Very likely included in some "Must-See Landmarks" book.

INT. DES' GARAGE - CONTINUING

Darkness. And then the garage door is pulled open from the outside, casting sunlight into every corner.

Des - fresh-faced, chipper - stands in the threshold, taking stock. There's an old workbench, a few tools, nuts & bolts etc. In the corner are two bikes. Des' eyes light up. Bingo.

A MONTAGE OF DES' AFTERNOON.

EXT. TOWN OF GOODNESS LAKES - DAY

1. Des rides. A light breeze blows through her hair, and she savors every moment. It's all very therapeutic, and Des lets the good vibes wash over her. As she continues

THROUGH TOWN

2. Des sees beautiful trees, a park, 'ma and pa' shops: a town with a history.

LATER, DOWNTOWN

3. She brakes just outside of a local coffee shop. She stares at it, wide-eyed. The shop is a mirage in the desert-wasteland of her former life.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP PATIO

4. Des sips a fancy latte, cupping the mug: a holy grail. She takes a long sip. It's heaven.

EXT. DES' BACKYARD - MEANWHILE

5. Bonnie tiptoes into the backyard, peeking into the living room and then the kitchen. *Secret reconnaissance.*

But everything seems to be in order.

EXT. STREETS/PSYCHIC SHOP - DAY

6. Des is biking again. She stops at a fork in the road, considers her two options. Some force unseen beckons her to the left.

Soon after, Des finds herself outside of a small, quaint home with a faded sign above the door: PSYCHIC READING. In the window, an LED 'OPEN' sign is lit up.

Des throws on the brakes. She stares at the shop with an intoxicating curiosity. But the moment passes, and Des continues on her way.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

7. Des pushes a small cart. She looks around, everything foreign and strange. Des bags a few pears in the produce section and continues on.

She turns down the

BAKING AISLE

And stops at the endless array of flour - literally dozens of options in today's food-sensitive society. She examines a bag of Chickpea Flour - has a "what the hell?" moment.

Another MEMORY creeps up on Des.

INSERT: Des (30), in flour-covered apron, writes with icing on a cake: "Welcome home

- BANG. Des is startled back to reality before we make it to the end of the memory. She spots a MOTHER and CHILD (4) further down the aisle.

A box of cake mix lies on the floor next to the kid.

MOTHER

Oopsie. Can you put that back please,
love?

CHILD

Okay.

The child stuffs the item back on the shelf and hurries after her mother, taking her hand. Des' heart breaks.

She finally snaps of it and carries on, barely making it a few steps before coming to a screeching halt again. The cake mix now sits askew on the shelf, sticking out like a sore thumb.

Des can't take her eyes off of the small, insignificant merchandise. It stares back at her - *challenging her*. Des wills herself to look away. *Leave it the fuck alone*. But her inner-OCD wins the battle, and she makes the item flush.

But now everything in the aisle seems out of place. Even the slightest inch of misalignment is unbearable, and DES BECOMES A MAD WOMAN. She starts fixing the entire aisle with crazed fury.

CLERK (O.S.)

Ma'am?

Des whips around - caught with her hand in the proverbial cookie jar. An innocent TEENAGE CLERK stares at Des, unsure.

CLERK

Can I help you?

Des looks him dead in the eye -

DES

...No.

She hurries away, leaving her cart behind.

PRODUCE SECTION

Bonnie's also here now, completely unaware of Des' presence. As Des makes for the exit, a CUSTOMER accidentally steps on the heel of Bonnie's flip-flop, sending Bonnie soaring...

RIGHT INTO DES' ARMS. Both women are frozen.

Bonnie looks up into Des' eyes, startled/shocked/bewildered but most of all - saved.

CUT TO: BLACK

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. BONNIE'S ROOM - MORNING - FLASHBACK

Back to the beginning.

SUPER: Wednesday morning

Bonnie's fast asleep. The instant her alarm goes off, she's awake, alert and out of bed.

INT. BONNIE'S KITCHEN - MORNING - FLASHBACK

Bonnie stands over the island, skimming through news articles on her iPad, eating peanut butter right out of the jar.

A brewing pot of coffee GURGLES, taking its final breath. Bonnie fills her mug and exits, leaving the jar of peanut butter open on the counter.

EXT. BONNIE'S PORCH - CONTINUING

Bonnie exits and sits. She DAYDREAMS.

INSERT: A hospital locker room for employees. Bonnie (mid 30s) sits on a bench in scrubs, sobbing.

Bonnie spots Des, and the rest of the teaser plays out again. Bonnie moves inside and the door SLAMS behind her.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Right where we left Des and Bonnie. Bonnie comes to her senses first, and pulls herself out of Des' grip.

CUSTOMER

Ma'am - God I'm so sorry!

BONNIE

It's fine. Honest mistake.

CUSTOMER

You sure you're okay?

Bonnie and Des still haven't broken their gaze.

BONNIE

I think so.

CUSTOMER
Okay... Sorry...

The customer hurries off, embarrassed for life.

BONNIE
Thank you.

DES
That fruit stand almost got the best
of you.

The same stand that Des bagged her pears from, to be exact.

Bonnie examines her torn flip flop.

BONNIE
Damn... ripped the sole clean off.
Guess that's what you get for shopping
dollar days at Old Navy...

Bonnie's lingo goes right over Des' head.

DES
Sorry...?

BONNIE
You know what - I'm sorry.

Bonnie firmly takes/shakes Des' hand.

BONNIE
Bonnie Barrow. Your rude neighbor.

DES
Desire Perrault.

BONNIE
Exotic. You Royalty or something?

DES
Des is fine.

BONNIE
Des... I totally shut you down this
morning. It was a dick move, and
that's on me -

DES
- Don't worry about it -

BONNIE

- No I mean it, you deserved better
than that -

DES

- Really, it's fine...

Bonnie stops. Looks her right in the eye.

BONNIE

You promise?

Of course Bonnie's joking... *right?* Des can't tell for sure
under the weight of Bonnie's intense gaze.

DES

Promise.

Bonnie smiles and the tension dissipates.

BONNIE

You like barbecue?

Des fumbles over an answer -

BONNIE

Why don't you come by this evening?
Forgiveness through food, or however
that shit goes...

(off Des' uncertainty)

I make a mean burger.

DES

As long as it's not an inconvenience -

BONNIE

- Oh my God, woman! If you're any
nicer to me, I might actually die.
Just say yes.

DES

(smiles)

Yes.

Bonnie pulls out her cell.

BONNIE

Good. What's your number?

DES
My phone's not hooked up yet.

BONNIE
(chuckles)
Your cell.

Des awkwardly smiles, not sure what to say.

BONNIE
Where on Earth did you come from,
Desire Perrault?

The question hits home, and Des continues to be tongue-tied.

BONNIE
Why don't you just come by around
seven thirty?

DES
Deal. It was nice to finally meet you,
Bonnie.

BONNIE
Back at ya.

Bonnie pushes her cart onward. With a renewed vigor, Des grabs another cart and starts over.

INT. DES' KITCHEN - DAY

Des unpacks her groceries from a paper bag. She lines everything up nice and neatly in the pantry.

Once finished, she looks around the empty room. *What to do next?*

LATER.

Des sits at the table, sipping coffee. It's way too quiet, and the TICKING CLOCK is almost deafening. It's not even 3PM. So many hours to go.

INT. DES' BEDROOM - DAY

Des sifts through her closet/dresser and throws a few bbq-casual options onto the bed.

SHE TRIES ON A FEW DIFFERENT COMBOS, but nothing seems right. It's all outdated. One particular outfit awakens a

MEMORY -

INSERT: In said outfit, Des (25) and her husband JIM (27) dance at a nightclub. Jim spins a carefree-Des around.

Des' bottom lip trembles, but she manages to keep it together. She takes the outfit off piece-by-piece, dejected.

EXT. BONNIE'S BACKYARD - SUNSET

Sounds of a SIZZLING BARBECUE lead Des to the backyard. Bonnie peers over her shoulder as she continues flipping burgers, an open beer in arm's reach.

BONNIE

Hey! You found me.

DES

I followed the cartoon wafts of
barbecue.

The joke lands flat, but Bonnie lets it slide.

BONNIE

I'll take that as a compliment. Let's
hope the rest of the neighborhood
isn't right behind.

DES

Not a fan of social gatherings?

BONNIE

Not really.

Silence. Bonnie looks over her shoulder. Off Des' confused
glance -

BONNIE

What?

DES

I just thought... with your little
party last night...

Busted.

BONNIE

Can I grab you a beer?

DES
Just water, thanks.

BONNIE
(*seriously?*)
Water?

Des instantly recognizes the suspicion on Bonnie's face, a pro at deciphering such looks.

DES
Don't drink on an empty stomach,
right?

Bonnie seems satisfied.

BONNIE
Smart. Wish I'd thought of that. Gimme
a sec.

Bonnie disappears into the house.

Des looks around the yard and sees a small swing set and sandbox. She's just about to 'reminisce' when Bonnie returns with a red solo cup of water.

BONNIE
Figured you for a Brita girl.

DES
Thanks.

Bonnie returns to the grill.

BONNIE
So... Where exactly did you come from,
Des?

DES
Kansas.

BONNIE
Just when you thought the world
couldn't get any smaller.

DES
What?

BONNIE
I'm from Kansas. Not exactly a hop,
skip and a jump from here.

DES
I guess not.

Bonnie puts the barbecuing on hold, and turns to face Des.

BONNIE
So you're telling me you came all this way - moved your entire life across the country - in one compact car?

DES
No, not exactly. Sorry, I should have clarified - Kansas is where I'm originally from, but I spent the last several years in Boston.

BONNIE
I didn't ask where you *grew up*. I asked you where you *came from*.

Des doesn't know what to say, nearly crumbling under the weight of Bonnie's piercing gaze.

But then, Bonnie smiles.

BONNIE
Gotchya.

Des smiles too, relieved.

DES
Yes, you did.

Bonnie returns to the barbecue.

DES
I guess you could say this place is my second chance.

BONNIE
Fresh start. Now *that* I understand.

DES
Funny how we both chose this little town.

BONNIE
Maybe not.

DES

No?

BONNIE

I didn't Goodness Lakes. It chose me.

Des is enthralled - such a concept resonating deeply. But before she can comment, Bonnie CRACKS UP.

BONNIE

Christ, I'm kidding! Can you imagine if I actually believed that shit? They must take your sense of humor along with the rent cheque over in Boston.

DES

They should put a picture of me under 'gullible' in the dictionary, right?

Another (outdated) attempt at humor that doesn't land with Bonnie.

BONNIE

The real truth is, I had a kid. I needed to get out of Kansas, so I picked the most secluded town I could find.

DES

A child...

Bonnie hears the longing in her voice.

BONNIE

Ava. My little Avalon.

DES

Such a beautiful name. How old is she?

BONNIE

Ten. One decade down. I must've fallen into a time warp or something. But I'll tell you one thing. That girl is special.

INSERT: A small blonde girl in the woods (facing away). Ava perhaps? Surrounding her are WOODLAND CREATURES - a tableau as eerie as it is beautiful.

BONNIE

Every parent says it, but I'm telling you - that girl's going to do big things.

(beat)

And you? Kids?

DES

I did once. I guess I still do. But I'm not part of her life anymore.

In that moment, there's so much hurt in both of their eyes.

BONNIE

I'm really sorry to hear that. I shouldn't have asked. I'm sorry.

DES

It's fine. Starting over doesn't mean the past goes away.

BONNIE

We never really forget, do we...

DES

Never.

A moment of silence. Nothing but the grill, but then Bonnie switches that off too.

BONNIE

That should do it. Burgers, slaw and potato salad. All homemade. When's the last time you had it this good?

DES

I can't even remember.

BONNIE

Then you my friend, are in for a surprise.

If Des only knew.

LATER.

Full dark. A fire pit casts flickers of light across the yard. Dinner's long over.

DES
I think I'm going to need an airlift
home.

BONNIE
I warned you.

DES
Next time's on me.

BONNIE
You like to cook?

DES
I used to. Baking... constantly
baking.

BONNIE
What changed?

DES
Everything.

BONNIE
You really do like it short and sweet,
don't you? Very private.

DES
Isn't everyone? Who wants a stranger
rooting through their garbage or
peeking in their windows?

It hits Bonnie in the gut. *Does she know?*

DES
The couple who lived in my house
before me - did you know them?

BONNIE
Very well.

DES
Did you know they slept in separate
beds?

Bonnie's silence says it all.

DES
Everyone has their secrets.

BONNIE
So what's yours?

Des' smile fades.

BONNIE
I'm guessing it explains why you're
halfway across the country? Away from
your kid - your husband.

DES
Ex-husband.

BONNIE
Exactly.

DES
And you? You're secret-free?

BONNIE
The people who live here know who I
am.

DES
That doesn't really answer the
question, does it?

BONNIE
I've got ten years of good behavior
under my belt. Ask anyone. They'll
tell you.

Des starts laughing to herself.

BONNIE
What's so funny?

DES
I'm sorry. It's just... I've spent the
last ten years in a mental
institution. So 'good behavior'...
Definitely not on my resume.

The blood drains from Bonnie's face. Not what she was
expecting.

Suddenly it's so very quiet. Even the crickets have stopped
chirping to listen in.

DES
I gave birth on my thirtieth

birthday. Apparently I was born at 2PM on the dot. Want to guess when my water broke?

Bonnie doesn't have to.

DES

So I started my thirties a mother to a perfect baby girl. I remember everything. The pain, holding her, how early she was. There were a few minutes where they thought she might not make it - that I might not make it. I barely had her for two minutes before they popped her in the incubator. "She's not done cooking"... that's what my husband said.

She chuckles at the anecdote.

DES

The hospital needed my room, so they sent me home without her. That was the worst week of my life. Confined to a bed, unable to leave - to visit her. But then it was finally time for her to come home.

Des' entire face changes as she remembers.

BONNIE

I don't understand.

INSERT: A beaming Jim (30s), gently passes Des a sleeping infant. Within seconds, Des' joy is replaced with agony.

DES

The child my husband brought home was not mine.

Data overload.

BONNIE

But that's just PPD. Women don't get... institutionalized for it.

DES

It was more than that...

QUICK INSERT: Close on Des (30), hiding behind a beautiful

fountain set in an array of foliage/greenery. She peers around the side, peeking at the entrance to a hospital. It's a deliberately-ambiguous piece of the puzzle.

DES

I did a bad thing. Something unforgivable. So, that was that. Ten years in the loony bin, watching my life disappear.

Bonnie clings to Des' every word.

BONNIE

What happened to you?

Des lowers her gaze for just a moment, recalling a decade of pain in an instant. They lock eyes again.

DES

I got better.

BONNIE

Is that what they told you? That they were "making" you better? You weren't sick. This world is sick.

DES

Eventually I stopped believing in fairy tales and finally started seeing what was right in front of me. And now I'm here.

BONNIE

Des...I am so sorry.

DES

For what?

Bonnie doesn't have an answer.

DES

I started my 30s free, and now I get to start my 40s free.

Des stands abruptly.

DES

And I should probably get going before I make things any more depressing. Thank for you tonight, Bonnie. You'll never know how much it

meant to me.

Bonnie's still too stunned to move, and Des shows herself out. Just before she's gone.

BONNIE

Ava...

Des turns. Bonnie's standing now.

BONNIE

She gets back from summer camp tomorrow... You could meet her, if you want?

DES

I'd like that.

BONNIE

Okay.

DES

Goodnight.

Des leaves.

INT. DES' BED & BATH - NIGHT

In the bathroom, Des finishes her bedtime routine.

She moves into the bedroom and climbs under the covers. Alone with her thoughts now, she smiles, a tiny weight off her shoulders.

INT. BONNIE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUING

Bonnie finishes dishes. She wrings out the sponge and sets it on the counter. She stops. Stares at the dry sponge - as if it had never been wet at all.

Without warning, she collapses, SOBBING.

FADE TO: BLACK.

EXT. DES' PORCH - DAY

Another gorgeous, sunny day. The CUL-DE-SAC NEIGHBORS are out and about, making the most of it.

Des basks in the warm afternoon sun.

Just then, Bonnie pulls up in her car, and Des sits up to inspect.

Out of the car leaps AVALON (10), a too-cute-to-handle pre-teen with an intoxicating giggle and two gorgeous pigtails. Des stands.

Bonnie spots Des and waves her over. Des joins them on

BONNIE'S FRONT LAWN.

BONNIE

Ava, this is our new neighbor, Desire.

Ava turns to face her and suddenly stops. Nothing. Just Ava's curious eyes looking up at Des.

DES

Hi, Avalon.

Des holds out her hand but Ava remains frozen.

BONNIE

What's up with you, huh? Don't be rude.

DES

It's okay, Bonnie.

But then, Ava takes her hand. An unexpected shock wave runs through Des, emotionally eviscerating her.

INSERT: Des holds her newborn's hand.

It's the very same feeling.

THE NEWBORN AND AVALON ARE ONE AND THE SAME.

It takes every last ounce of strength for Des to maintain her composure.

DES

It's very nice to meet you.

Bonnie doesn't notice any of this, preoccupied with Ava.

BONNIE

Child, when was the last time you washed your hair?

Ava's eyes still haven't left Des.

BONNIE

You need a shower - stat!

Bonnie leads Ava inside.

BONNIE

(to Des)

Later!

Des treks back to the house, in full zombie mode. Devoid of emotion.

INT. DES' HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Des closes the door behind her. She takes a slow step forward, and then another. AND THEN DES FAINTS.

CUT TO: BLACK

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. JEFFREY'S BEDROOM - MORNING - FLASHBACK

Another reboot to the beginning.

SUPER: Wednesday morning

A clean/organized teen's room. Laptop/books/homework on the desk, posters of Top 40-artists on the walls.

A PHONE ALARM goes off to the tune of some UPBEAT SONG.

JEFFREY (16, slim, shy, *fragile*) wakes up. He silences the alarm and slowly sits up. When he finally finds the strength to leave the safety of his bed, Jeffrey moves to the mirror, in nothing but boxers.

He stares at his reflection. Suddenly - without warning - A FLOOD OF TEARS. Whether it's his average looks or something entirely unrelated, the entire world has suddenly come crashing down on him. He returns to his warm bed and pulls the covers up to his neck.

Jeffrey lies still, no end in sight to his tears.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. DES' LIVING ROOM - DAY

Des sits huddled in the corner, in a daze.

DES

She's not yours. Your daughter is in
Kansas. This is not real.

She lets the mantra sink in and then finally finds the
strength to pull herself up. Des moves into the

KITCHEN

And fishes out her pills. She opens the cupboard door, only
to realize the cups are still in the dishwasher.

Des impulsively slams the door shut, surprising even herself.

DES

Calm. Down.

Des grabs a clean cup out of the dishwasher, but as she goes
to fill it, she realizes there's now a massive crack in it.

She stares at the cup, TAP RUNNING in the background. Without
warning, she launches the cup at the far wall like a pro
pitcher.

THE CUP SHATTERS, totally eviscerated.

DES

There. All better.

She storms out.

INT. BONNIE'S BASEMENT - LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

Bonnie's in the middle of laundry when Ava enters. She holds
up a shirt - caked in grime and dirt - for Ava to see.

BONNIE

They put you to work in a coal mine?

Bonnie smiles and continues loading the washer.

BONNIE

When I said 'have fun,' I didn't mean
'destroy every last piece of clothing

you own'...

A sullen Ava remains lip-locked.

BONNIE

What's up, sweet thing?

No answer.

BONNIE

I think our new neighbor must've put a spell on you...

Ava looks away.

BONNIE

Alright, come here.

Bonnie scoops Ava up and carries her into the

BASEMENT DEN

Where they curl up on a couch.

BONNIE

Out with it. Something happen at camp?

Ava shakes her head.

BONNIE

Then what is going on, goofball?

Ava finally looks up Bonnie, totally vulnerable.

AVA

Don't you like her?

Bonnie's completely disarmed.

BONNIE

Desire? Of course I do. Why wouldn't I?

AVA

I don't know...

But Ava's look suggests otherwise. Bonnie smiles reassuringly.

BONNIE

You know what I don't know? What I'm supposed to do with such a silly child.

Bonnie snuggles a giggling Ava even closer, out of eye contact - away from her look of guilt.

BONNIE

You know what - why don't we invite Des on our walk? How's that sound?

Ava smiles. Problem diffused - *for now*.

INT. DES' BEDROOM - CONTINUING

Des stands at the foot of the bed, looking down at the crisp sheets.

DR. HARRIS (V.O.)

What you need is to relax. To rest.

Des is made bitter by the equally-sour memory. In one quick motion, she WHIPS the blanket off the bed, and

WE'RE TRANSPORTED TO:

INT. SERENITY CARE/DES' ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Des (30) sits facing the corner, wrapped in a blanket - a defenseless animal. She's weathered. At the end of her rope.

DES

I need my child.

Behind Des, the predator: DOCTOR HARRIS (50s) - stern, keen-eyed and clever. Her bullshit-meter is off the charts and it's impossible to tell at any given moment if she's patronizing or genuinely concerned.

DR. HARRIS

Can't you see the harm that this *fable* is doing to you? It's killing you.

Des bursts up off the ground and faces Harris.

DES

YOU ARE KILLING ME!

Des is completely changed. Unlike we've ever seen. But Dr. Harris remains completely unaffected by the outburst. Always stone cold.

DES

You think you know everything. How could you ever understand?

Dr. Harris' expression changes just slightly. Then,

DR. HARRIS

When I was a little girl, my daddy died. At the funeral, my mother would not let me see the body. I wasn't old enough - or perhaps worthy enough - to look upon the dead. In the coming days, I became convinced that he wasn't gone. And so he wasn't. Do you understand what I'm saying, Desire?

Des does, indeed - as much as she doesn't want to.

DR. HARRIS

The 'seeing' of things is not the problem. It's the 'believing' in them.

DES

Tell me what you need me to say and I'll say it.

Dr. Harris moves closer.

DR. HARRIS

There are no magic words. All you have to do... is let go.

A few hopeless tears roll down Des' cheeks. Dr. Harris leaves.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. DES' BEDROOM - DAY

Des clutches the blanket - on the verge of reverting to her former state.

But instead, she tosses it aside and storms out.

EXT. BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Des bursts through the kitchen door.

She closes her eyes and takes a deep breath of fresh air - a reminder of her new freedom. When she reopens them, she finds herself facing the tree.

Des impulsively climbs to the very top. Under the cover of leaves and branches, she looks out over the yard, until the RUSTLING OF BRANCHES catches her eye.

Des looks over to find AVA staring back at her - perched in the tree in her own backyard.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

To establish.

STUDENTS and PARENTS alike filter into the school. A big "WELCOME FRESHMEN!" banner hangs over the entryway.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAYS - CONTINUING

Jeffrey and his mother, HELEN (late 40s), navigate the crowded halls. Helen consults a school memo.

HELEN

Okay, I think you're in here.

Helen looks up at the room number.

HELEN

Aha!

She leads Jeffrey into his

HOMEROOM

Where other parent/teenager combos are mingling. The most opportunistic parents hover around the teacher, ADELE SANFORD (late 20s).

While they not-so-tactfully try to curry favor for their children, Adele - reassuring, yet diplomatic - holds her own.

Jeffrey looks around the room. Everything is unfamiliar and totally fucking frightening. But when Jeffrey sees a fellow student - CONNOR (16) - the air completely leaves the room.

Connor's a total heartthrob, a 15 out of 10. Jeffrey can't stop staring.

HELEN (O.S.)
Front or back?

Jeffrey snaps out of it and turns to his mother.

HELEN
Choose wisely. Every decision you make from now on goes on your permanent record.

Helen winks.

JEFFREY
Here's fine...

They sit.

ADELE
Hi everyone! It looks like we have a full-house today, so if everyone could please take a seat, you would all be my personal saviors.

Everyone sits.

ADELE
So well behaved, I'm impressed!

CHUCKLES all around. *Suck-ups.*

ADELE
Welcome everyone to orientation. My name's Adele Sanford. I know the school year hasn't officially started, but we truly appreciate you bringing in your little ones - what am I saying - they're *FRESHMEN* now!

The parents totally eat it up, while the students dream of being anywhere else.

ADELE
And to my students - because they are going to be mine for a good chunk of the day - I know how utterly terrifying this feels. I'm sure you're seeing a lot of new faces today -

Jeffrey can't take his eyes off of Connor. Connor finally looks over, and Jeffrey tears his gaze away, totally humiliated. The smallest of grins from Connor.

ADELE

- but hopefully you're seeing some familiar ones too. And if you're not... well now you know mine. And even though I'm your teacher first, hopefully I can be your friend. We're in this together now.

INT. DES' KITCHEN - DAY

Des stands at the island, lost in thought again, her face dark. She absentmindedly slides a knife in and out of a knife block, on auto-pilot.

DR. HARRIS (V.O.)

This phantom - the one who allegedly stole your child. What do you imagine doing to them?

A KNOCK at the front door, and Des slides the knife back into the block with a HARD THUD, breaking the trance.

Des moves to the

PORCH

And opens the front door to find Bonnie and Ava on the other side, donning running shoes and caps. Des is a little surprised - *frazzled* - and it shows.

BONNIE

Hey... what's up?

Interrogation or invitation? Des can't be sure.

EXT. WALKING TRAIL - DAY (LATER)

The trio hikes together through a serene trail. Ava scouts ahead, full of curiosity.

AVA

...And my favorite thing at camp was the big tree fort. Because you could climb up the rope ladder, or you could even just climb the tree if you wanted. Because I'm great at climbing trees now!

BONNIE

Why does that not surprise me?

Bonnie looks over at Des knowingly.

BONNIE

That's the child you were supposed to meet.

Des takes in her surroundings.

DES

This is lovely.

BONNIE

Good to get away from it all, isn't it?

Des knows exactly.

DES

Are we close to these lakes I've been hearing about?

BONNIE

Our "namesake lakes?" Not quite. It's up at the community park, where they have 'Goodness Days.'

DES

(sarcastic)

You seem thrilled.

BONNIE

It's fine. A little too much team spirit for me.

DES

It sounds nice... being together.

BONNIE

Key word: *sounds*. I like my me-time. Loaner at heart...

Another break in the conversation. Des eyes Ava.

DES

She's not yours, is she?

BONNIE

'Scuse me.

DES
I just meant...

A moment of intense eye contact; in a split second, Bonnie has become the prey, ready to defend - to stay alive at all costs. But then she shrugs it off.

BONNIE
It's okay, you can say it - I'm black,
she's white. Yes, she's adopted.

DES
Adopted...

The evidence is stacking up.

BONNIE
It was a combination of things.

Now the past is creeping up on Bonnie, and she can feel Des' hot stare on her.

BONNIE
Things don't always turn out the way
you expect. You get to a certain point
and realize that if you want
something...

INSERT: Bonnie (early 30s) in scrubs, staring at rows of newborn babies.

BONNIE
...you gotta make it happen. Coz sure
as hell, no one else is gonna help
you.

Again with the shared sadness in both Bonnie and Des' eyes.

DES
Well, it looks like you got it.

BONNIE
And ten years later, I'm still not
sure what I've gotten myself into.

DES
She's wonderful, Bonnie. Truly.

BONNIE

When she isn't a little devil...

A small grin curls Bonnie's mouth as she watches Ava - kneeling by a big tree.

Behind the tree (out of sight of Bonnie/Des) a squirrel makes eye contact with Ava, looking up at her curiously. It's almost as if they're having a private conversation. During this:

BONNIE

But she is the best goddamn thing that's ever happened to me.

DES

I know the feeling.

Bonnie clues into her own insensitivity.

BONNIE

God... look at me - flapping my mouth.
I have a real problem not knowing when to shut up.

DES

Don't apologize for something so beautiful. I'm happy for you, Bonnie.
She's all yours.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Jeffrey waits just outside the school while Helen chats with other parents.

Suddenly, an expensive car rolls up to the school. The windows are down, and Jeffrey sees an ATTRACTIVE GUY (late 20s) behind the wheel.

Immediately after, Connor brushes past Jeffrey and gets into the car. The duo speeds off into the sunset, leaving a stunned Jeffrey in the dust.

INT. JEFFREY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jeffrey lies on top of his bed, lost in thought.

INSERT: Connor. Lots of Connor.

Without warning, Jeffrey sits up. A tear hits his pant leg, followed by another.

Jeffrey's crying again, and it takes him by surprise. He frantically wipes them away.

JEFFREY
(under his breath)
Fuck...
()

He's soon distracted by HUSHED SOBS from down the hall. Jeffrey slides off the bed and moves into the

HALLWAY,

Tiptoeing towards the sound. He peers into his

PARENTS' BEDROOM

And spies Helen sitting at the foot of the bed, doing her best to muffle her sobs. She grabs a BOTTLE OF PILLS and pops the cap.

Helen quickly swallows two pills dry and then hides the bottle in a dresser drawer.

Jeffrey can't believe his eyes.

CUT TO: BLACK

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. UNA'S HOME - BEDROOM - MORNING - FLASHBACK

One last blast to the past.

SUPER: Wednesday morning

An older woman sleeps in a recliner, covered in a blanket. UNA (60s) is completely still - *who knows how long she's been there?*

She might be frail, but she's sharp - waking at EXACTLY 7AM without an alarm.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER - FLASHBACK

Una sits at the table, waiting for the kettle to boil.

It's clear now the toll that time has taken on her, but Una wears it well. The wrinkles & blemishes aren't flaws - they're battle wounds from wars she's always survived.

The kettle finally WHISTLES and at the same moment, Una becomes keenly alert, senses heightened. SOMETHING'S ON HER MIND - but it's not the kettle.

Una stands, ignoring it as she moves (with effort) back into the

PARLOR

And begins rummaging through a small closet. She comes back with the LED "OPEN" sign and a small tablecloth.

She places the sign in the window, plugging it in.

EXT. UNA'S HOUSE - CONTINUING

And just like that, the house has become the PSYCHIC SHOP from Des' bike ride.

BACK INSIDE

Una pulls a small end table into the center of the room, throwing the tablecloth over top. She pulls a few chairs up to the table, and then steps back to survey the scene.

Una is ready.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. BONNIE'S LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

A TICKING CLOCK sounds over top of a MONTAGE.

1. With one eye always on the door, Bonnie sneaks a cigar.

INT. AVA'S ROOM - CONTINUING

2. Fast sleep, Ava covers her nose.

INT. DES' DEN - CONTINUING

3. Des sits at her laptop, staring at the setup page for a social media account. The heading reads: 'Tell us about yourself'.

Des just stares at the blinking cursor.

AVA'S ROOM

4. Ava begins to stir.

DES' DEN

5. Des minimizes the screen and opens a folder - labeled "Memories" - on her desktop.

BONNIE'S LAUNDRY ROOM

6. Bonnie inhales again. Pure bliss.

DES' DEN

7. Des opens an old photo of herself in the hospital with her child.

AVA'S ROOM

8. Ava wakes up.

BONNIE'S LAUNDRY ROOM

9. Bonnie hears footsteps above and hurriedly puts out the cigar.

DES' DEN

10. Des quickly closes the laptop.

END MONTAGE.

INT. JEFFREY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Jeffrey sits at the kitchen table, lost in thought. A soggy bowl of forgotten cereal rests in front of him.

Jeffrey looks up at Helen, her back to him as she washes dishes.

JEFFREY

Mom... What are the pills for?

Helen instantly freezes. When she finally works up the courage to face him, she's pale.

HELEN

What pills?

JEFFREY

The ones from yesterday.

Busted. Her bottom lip trembles, but Helen maintains her composure as she sits opposite Jeffrey.

HELEN

You were not supposed to see that.

JEFFREY

Is it something bad?

HELEN

No, honey. Nothing bad.

JEFFREY

Then why is it a secret?

HELEN

Because it's embarrassing.

(pause)

When I was your age, I had so many dreams. A house like this. A family.

JEFFREY

But we are your family.

She takes his hand.

HELEN

Sometimes, even when moms and dads get everything they ever wanted, something still isn't right inside.

JEFFREY

Like what? What is it?

A couple of tears escape her eyes. She forces a smile.

HELEN

Nothing a young boy needs to worry about.

But Jeffrey won't let it go.

JEFFREY

And taking them makes you feel better?

HELEN

Yes, sweetheart. All better.

She runs a hand through his hair.

HELEN

You're a worry wart, just like your dad. Everything's going to be okay.

She kisses his forehead, and then notices the soggy cereal.
She clears it.

HELEN
You let it sit too long.

She leaves Jeffrey with his thoughts.

EXT. DES' BACKYARD - NIGHT

Des sits alone, looking up at the night sky. CHATTER from next door draws Des to

BONNIE'S BACKYARD.

From the darkness, Des spies on Bonnie and Ava having dinner.

Des watches them with a grim intensity.

DR. HARRIS (V.O.)
*You are on a dangerous path. You've
convinced yourself of a reality that
does not exist.*

Des REMEMBERS.

INT. SERENITY CARE/DES' ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Des and the good doctor, as usual.

DES
And that's why you're here? To set me
straight?

DR. HARRIS
No, Des. I'm here to help you
understand.

DES
Understand... What exactly are you
going to help me 'understand?'

DR. HARRIS
That being wrong is okay.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. BONNIE'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Des continues watching, a mix of hatred & resentment

building up inside of her.

Just as she's about to explode, Des storms off.

EXT. STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

Des stops on the sidewalk outside of her house, searching for an escape from the cul-de-sac.

Then, SOMETHING DAWNS ON HER and Des hurries off.

INT. UNA'S HOME - NIGHT

Una's about to switch off the 'OPEN' sign, when THROUGH THE WINDOW she notices a figure staring right at her.

It's Des - looking for answers.

Instead of switching off the light, Una backs away. It's an invitation.

OUTSIDE OF UNA'S HOUSE

Curiosity finally gives in, and Des approaches. She goes to knock, but then decides to just let herself in.

INT. UNA'S PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Des is instantly hit with a variety of sights and smells. The old home is full of character - from a different time. But yet, the foundation is just as it was the day it was made.

It's adorned with all of the usual mystical bric-à-brac, but it feels completely honest. There's no gimmick here.

Des moves further inside and finds herself in the

PARLOR,

Where Una waits, standing behind a small, round table. Now face-to-face, Des can see just how full a life Una has lived. From the deep wrinkles, to the blemishes & marks, to her keen stare - every moment is permanently etched into Una's being.

UNA

Looks like you made it just in time.
Right under the wire.

DES
I wasn't sure I'd even come in.

UNA
Yes you were.

Des stays silent, unsure how to counter.

UNA
Last customer of the day's the most trouble.

DES
I thought it was the first.

UNA
Not the way I see it. First in line always knows what they want. But the last? They spend the whole day hemming and hawing, knowing full-well that no matter how many ways they think it through, they're still going to end up on my doorstep.

DES
I guess you would know.

UNA
Honey, human nature's no mystery, mystic or not. In the end, we all want the same damn thing.

DES
What do I want?

Una smiles knowingly.

UNA
Why don't you sit down, *Desire Perrault*?

Des does a double-take. Una sits at the table and Des joins her.

UNA
I'm Una Kemp. Now we're even. Perrault... that French?

DES
Maybe?

UNA

(laughs)

You don't know?! They stop teaching that family tree shit in school?

DES

Aren't you supposed to have all the answers?

UNA

Let's get one thing straight, before we go any further. I am not God! If I was all-knowing, I'd have gone mad ages ago. No, this doesn't work any particular way. It's forever changing.

Des knows all about that.

UNA

But the one thing we do have to be is in it. Together. We're about to get into the goddamn thick of it. Really knowing someone? That's about the most-intimate thing I can think of.

Des pulls out her purse.

DES

How much?

Una gets up, switches off the 'OPEN' sign, and returns to her seat.

UNA

I'm off the clock - which means this is F-O-C.

DES

That's very kind of you.

UNA

I have a sense you might be in need of a friend.

DES

You'll have to do better than that.

UNA

Oh Des... that was nothing.

DES

What do you need me to do?

UNA

Take my hands. That's it, that's all.

Una places her hands on the table, palms up. Des hesitates, and Una waits patiently, always analyzing.

DES

This is crazy, isn't it?

UNA

Would that worry you?

Des is totally exposed, vulnerable.

UNA

This is not a confession. I'm not your priest, your psychiatrist. All you have to do is take my hands and not let go.

Des finally places her hands in Una's, and Una gently grips them.

UNA

Now look at me.

They lock eyes, and for a moment, all is still. Then, Una's brow furrows, her face growing serious. Suddenly, she GASPS - as if she's been winded - and she finally lets go.

Des is petrified.

UNA

I'm... I'm so sorry for your loss.

Des' heart drops into her chest.

UNA

I can't even begin to understand.

Des is practically shaking.

DES

That's it? "Sorry for your loss?" What did you see? Tell me.

UNA

Des -

DES

- You tell me! Say it!

Una can still barely speak.

UNA

Your child. Gone.

Des is on the verge of a complete breakdown.

DES

This isn't real.

Des stands. Looks at Una one last time -

DES

This is not real.

She leaves.

UNA

That awful thing they made you do. Did you really do it?

Des stops. Turns. But just when it looks like she might open up, Des flees.

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Des speeds away, leaving Una's home in the dust.

INTERCUT WITH:

AVA'S ROOM - CONTINUING

Ava lies on the bed, writing in her diary.

INTERCUT WITH:

JEFFREY'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUING

Jeffrey watches television with his mom and dad, THOMAS. Totally distracted, Jeffrey finally stands.

JEFFREY

Be right back...

He exits.

AVA'S ROOM

Ava suddenly stops writing, mid pen stroke. She looks up. Then, Ava moves to the window and looks out into the darkness.

STREETS

Des stops. Looks up at the road ahead of her. It seems to stretch on for eternity.

AVA'S ROOM

Ava's little eyes are focused. At the same moment that she moves away from the window -

STREETS

- Des starts jogging.

JEFFREY'S PARENTS' BEDROOM

Jeffrey slides the dresser open. The same one with Helen's pills.

STREETS

Des picks up the pace, never letting up - burning through every last ounce of energy.

JEFFREY'S ROOM

He sits at the foot of his bed, pills in one hand, glass of water in the other.

JEFFREY'S LIVING ROOM

Helen and Thomas are hit with an unexpected BLAST OF WHITE NOISE from the television.

THOMAS

SHIT!

As they scramble to find the remote, the front door opens, muted behind the static. TWO SMALL FEET enter undetected.

JEFFREY'S ROOM

Just as he lifts the pills to his mouth -

AVA (O.S.)

Hi.

Jeffrey lurches to his feet, dropping the glass and scattering the pills all over the floor.

JEFFREY

Who are you?

AVA

I'm Ava. Are you Jeffrey?

JEFFREY

Why are you in my room?

AVA

I could hear you.

Jeffrey goes beet red, completely and totally humiliated.

JEFFREY

What are you talking about? Get out!

Ava looks at the pills.

AVA

Those only help for a little while.

JEFFREY

You don't know. My mom said they make you feel better.

AVA

Do you want to feel better?

JEFFREY

I just...

He starts to cry.

JEFFREY

I don't want to feel like this anymore.

Silence for just a moment.

AVA

Okay.

OUTSIDE DES' HOUSE

Des finally makes it back. She stops running, drenched in sweat. When she finally catches her breath she YELLS up at the night sky -

It's a bellowing wail of agony and pain - one that's been dormant for years.

And then A SINGLE TEAR runs down her cheek, nearly startling Des to death. She catches it on her finger and checks for confirmation of its existence.

More tears come. Crying turns to sobbing and Des falls to her knees, clutching her stomach.

And then - the RUMBLINGS OF A STORM. Des looks up.

JEFFREY'S ROOM

Ava moves to Jeffrey's side and gently takes his hands. She looks into his eyes.

Jeffrey waits for something to happen. AND THEN IT HITS HIM.

OUTSIDE DES' HOUSE

It starts to rain.

JEFFREY'S ROOM

He locks eyes with Ava again, full of something completely inexplicable. Tears roll down his cheeks, but yet he's not crying. Ava's gaze never falters.

OUTSIDE DES' HOUSE

Des is completely still as the rain hits her.

INSERT: Des in her Serenity room, looking out the window at a similar rain storm. But here, it's unattainable - just out of reach.

An small, unexpected laugh escapes her.

JEFFREY'S ROOM

When Jeffrey's tears finally dry up, Ava lets go. He's still. Processing. And then he smiles, hardly able to believe the miracle he's just experienced.

OUTSIDE DES' HOUSE

Des smiles too. She holds out her hands as the downpour become a monsoon.

AND THEN SHE LAUGHS.

In an instant, her agony has become pure joy. She stands, fully drenched now. Des embraces the storm, its effects euphoric. There is only her and the rain.

It's freedom.

CUT TO: BLACK

END ACT FOUR**ACT FIVE****EXT. CLOTHING BOUTIQUE - MORNING**

SUPER: Sunday morning

It's early. The streets are empty. Des walks, enjoying the quiet of the pre-Sunday rush. She looks more at ease than she's ever been.

She stops in front of a boutique - currently closed. MANNEQUINS are on display in the front window, and Des looks up at the stoic figures: empty shells dressed up.

An optical illusion of sorts. There's also a CHILD MANNEQUIN, and Des puts her hand to the glass, forever unable to reach it.

She switches her gaze to her own reflection, and her smile fades. With the security gate pulled shut across the window, Des' reflection is stuck inside - trapped.

Des takes a shaky step back and then flees.

INT. BONNIE'S ROOM - CONTINUING

Bonnie throws clean scrubs in a bag.

BONNIE

Okay monkey, get that butt out of bed!

She moves into

AVA'S ROOM

And is hit with the sight of Ava in bed, DELIRIOUS AND DRENCHED IN SWEAT. Bonnie's eyes go wide.

She lunges at Ava, pulling her into her arms.

BONNIE

Ava? AVA?!

EXT. DES' HOUSE - LATER

Still distraught, Des returns to find Bonnie pounding on her door.

DES

Bonnie?

BONNIE

Des! Thank God. Ava's sick! She has a fever. Hundred and eight.

DES

Oh my God... Bonnie, she needs a hospital.

BONNIE

I can't.

DES

You can't?

BONNIE

I JUST CAN'T!

They're both shaken by Bonnie's surprise outburst.

BONNIE

I'm a nurse. This is what I do. But I'm out of everything, and I can't take her with me.

DES

I'll go. What do you need?

BONNIE

I need you to watch Ava.

It takes every last ounce of strength for Des to stay standing.

BONNIE

I know what I'm asking you. How selfish it is. But I know exactly what I need and where to get it.

DES

But... I don't know what to do.

BONNIE

Yes you do. I know you do. Help me - please.

DES

Okay.

BONNIE

Thank you.

Bonnie leaps into her car and speeds away. Des starts towards Bonnie's house on wobbly legs.

DES (V.O.)

10...9...8...

INSERT: Des underwater, surfacing, as she continues to count down. On 1, she bursts above water - gasping for air.

Des opens the front door to Bonnie's house. She stands in the threshold for a moment, unable to move.

INT. AVA'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Des enters cautiously. Ava's right where Bonnie left her - shivering in bed.

AVA

Mommy?

DES

It's Des.

AVA

Where's my mom?

DES

She'll be back soon.

Ava GROANS. Des pulls a chair up next to the bed, so out of her element.

Des spots a small basin of water and an already-damp cloth on the nightstand. Des wets the cloth again and gently dabs Ava's forehead.

AVA

I'm hot... but I'm cold too.

DES

It's your body's way of telling you something's wrong.

AVA

Something's always wrong...

Whether it's wisdom or the fever talking, the words hit Des hard.

AVA

Can I have a bath?

DES

Sure.

Des stands and exits into the

HALLWAY.

On her way to the bathroom, Des comes across a memory wall - pictures galore. One particular photo stands out - Bonnie holding infant Ava.

EXT. MALL FOOD COURT - CONTINUING

Jeffrey sits at a table with TWO FRIENDS, both girls. Jeffrey's full of energy, chatting, laughing and smiling.

There's no trace of sadness left.

Unbeknownst to Jeffrey, Connor walks by - earbuds in and music on. He notices Jeffrey and suddenly, Connor can't take his eyes off of him.

INT. UNA'S PARLOR - CONTINUING

Una sits very still, completely submerged in her own thoughts. *Clearly unhappy thoughts.* A KNOCK at the door brings her back to life.

Una moves towards the

FRONT DOOR

And finds a YOUNG COUPLE on the front step.

FEMALE

Hi there, sorry to bother you. I know the light's not on, but we were hoping you might do a reading?

UNA

I'm sorry. I can't help you.

Una closes the door and returns to the

LIVING ROOM

Where she picks up right where she left off.

INT. BONNIE'S HOME - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUING

Ava and Des stand next to the tub. Wrapped in a towel, Ava tips her foot in the water.

AVA

It's too warm.

DES

It'll help.

AVA

It will?

DES

I promise.

Ava slides into the tub. Des turns to leave -

AVA

NO!

DES

Okay. I'll stay.

Des flips the toilet lid down and sits.

AVA

Why do people get sick?

The question knocks the wind out of Des, and she thinks long and hard.

DES
I don't know. Sometimes it just happens.

AVA
Will it happen again?

DES
I hope not.

AVA
Me too.

Ava looks up at Des, her eyes vulnerable and suddenly very aware - as if her feverish haze has fallen away for a brief moment.

DES
What's the matter?

AVA
Why don't I look like my mom?

Des is so still. She lets the question linger as she tries to process the last ten years in an instant.

And then, without warning, Des stands and exits quickly.

FRONT DOOR.

Just as Des reaches for the knob, Bonnie comes bursting inside.

BONNIE
You scared the shit out of me!
(off Des' look)
What's wrong?

Des tries to form words, but quickly gives up and slips past Bonnie.

BONNIE
Des?

EXT. DES HOME - CONTINUOUS

Des hurries towards her house and Bonnie watches her go, totally puzzled.

BONNIE
Des!?

Des enters, and the door SLAMS shut behind her.

CUT TO: BLACK

EXT. BONNIE'S HOUSE - SUNSET

To establish.

INT. AVA'S ROOM - CONTINUING

Bonnie sits at Ava's bedside. Ava wakes up.

BONNIE
Hey, sweetpea.

AVA
Hi mom.

BONNIE
How are you feeling?

AVA
A little better.

BONNIE
Good. Think you could eat something?

Ava nods.

BONNIE
Do you remember what happened this morning?

AVA
You left.

Bonnie swallows hard.

BONNIE
Right.

AVA
And Ms. Perrault was here. But then she left too.

BONNIE
Did something happen?

AVA
I don't think she was feeling well either.

Bonnie squeezes Ava's hand.

BONNIE

I love you, baby. I love you so much.
You know that, right?

Ava nods. Bonnie manages to keep her emotions at bay as she scoops Ava up and carries her out.

EXT. UNA'S HOME - NIGHT

Tight on Des - too close to tell (yet) where she is/what she's staring at with such intensity.

DR. HARRIS (V.O.)

*When was the first time you became
convinced your daughter had been
taken?*

Des REMEMBERS.

INT. SERENITY CARE/DES' ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Des sits on her bed - emotionally worn out. Dr. Harris analyzes her from across the room, Des refusing to look at her.

DES

You don't believe me, so what does it matter?

DR. HARRIS

It all matters.

Des begrudgingly meets her gaze.

DES

I just knew.

DR. HARRIS

You knew... Well, Des, there's really not much I can do with your woman's intuition.

DES

Ain't that a shame...

DR. HARRIS

I need you to give me something real.
Can you do that?

DES
Do you have children?

DR. HARRIS
I do not.

DES
So you have no idea what it's like to
hold a child? Your child. In your arms -
right after she's been born.

Harris says nothing.

DES
I'd describe it for you - but it
probably wouldn't be 'real' enough.
That child - that little girl that
came from inside of me... was not the
one Jim brought home. When did I
'become convinced?' The second he put
that thing in my arms.

DR. HARRIS
Then perhaps you are right. Perhaps
someone out there did take your child.
Or maybe... maybe what you felt that
day was simply *different*. That
sensation you had after giving birth?
How could it ever be replicated?

DES
You really don't have a clue.

DR. HARRIS
Memory's a funny little thing, isn't
it? The past becomes the present in an
instant. And sometimes it even sneaks
up on us when we least expect it,
doesn't it? Memory is life after
death. But Des - not all memories are
meant to live. Some of them hurt us...
and others.

DES
I will never forget.

DR. HARRIS
And that is precisely why you are
here. With me.
(Beat)

And it looks like we're back to where we started.

She stands.

DR. HARRIS
But that's alright. We have plenty of time.

She moves next to Des.

DR. HARRIS
I promise - I will make you better.

DES
I am not crazy.

Dr. Harris leans in close.

DR. HARRIS
Yes you are.

She exits. Des silently weeps.

INT. SERENITY CARE/HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Harris moves past dozens of rooms, each room filled with PATIENTS just like Des.

She continues into her

OFFICE

And sits at her desk. She looks over at a recent photo of herself and a man old enough to be her father.

But her father is dead... right?

Dr. Harris' eyes are dark, impossible to read.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. UNA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Una washes dishes the old-fashioned way. As with every other action, this too is labored.

Una opens a cabinet. Just as she's about to return a clean mug, she pauses. *Again with the heightened senses.*

Then, she backtracks, setting the mug on the counter along

with another. Finally, she turns the kettle on and moves to the

ENTRYWAY.

Una opens the door and finds exactly what she's expecting: Des.

They stare at each other for a moment.

DES
I didn't even knock...

Una manages a small smile.

UNA
I put on some tea.

INT. UNA'S PARLOR - LATER

Des sits at the small table. Una joins her with the tea. More silence - neither woman knowing where to start.

DES
I'm sorry.

UNA
Now what on Earth would you have to be sorry for?

DES
For last night - leaving like that.
You were kind to me... I was cruel.

UNA
People run away all the time. They don't like what I have to say... Comes with the job.
(beat)
The only thing worse than not "getting it" is getting it one hundred percent.

DES
How does it work?

UNA
You mean 'what's the gimmick?'

DES
No... How is this possible?

UNA

If we knew that, we'd all be putting signs in our windows.

DES

I spent ten years trying to make someone else understand. But you knew everything instantly.

UNA

Just one side of a very complicated coin.

DES

Maybe we'd be better off if everyone could do what you do.

UNA

Knowledge doesn't fix everything.

DES

I tried starting over. All I wanted was to stop remembering... But instead, I just keep lying to myself.

(tears up)

I think I'm going crazy again. Or maybe I was never better at all.

UNA

Those people, despite the shit they put you through, have given you a second chance. But have you?

DES

I don't deserve it.

Des REMEMBERS -

EXT. HOSPITAL (KANSAS) - DAY - FLASHBACK

An extended flashback of Des outside the hospital, hiding behind the fountain. ONLY THIS TIME, we see she's holding the INTERLOPER CHILD.

When the ORDERLIES (standing at the entrance) move back inside, Des ditches the baby on the front mat and runs off, but she's instantly spotted -

ORDERLY

HEY! HEYYYYY!

END FLASHBACK.

INT. UNA'S PARLOR - NIGHT

Full-on waterworks now -

DES

They were right about me. Every single one of them. I don't deserve to be forgiven.

UNA

Well, if it means anything - I forgive you. I forgive you because you were right. It may have taken ten years, and a whole lot of pain, but you did it. You found her.

Des is stunned. *Stung*.

DES

How do I know this is real?

UNA

Don't you?

Des lets it all wash over her.

DES

I don't know what I'm supposed to do.

UNA

Yes you do.

A FINAL MONTAGE TO LEAD US OUT:

EXT. GOODNESS PARK - DAY

An enormous "Goodness Day 2017" banner towers above the frolicking TOWNSPEOPLE. High above it all - a glorious summer sun.

Throughout the park are concessions, bouncy castles & other organized activities - buckets of family fun.

Des, Bonnie and Ava walk together. Ava accidentally lets go of her bright red helium balloon.

AVA

OH NO!

()

Des watches it go.

EXT. GOODNESS PARK - LAKESIDE - LATER

Everyone stands together on a large green space as the MAYOR takes the podium.

MAYOR

Goodness Days is not only a celebration of our town, but of its people. I truly believe there is good inside all of us, even if we sometimes forget. We take this day to show off our truest, kindest selves, and to celebrate the things that bring us together. It's no coincidence that our two great lakes meet right here - in our town.

The Mayor gestures to the lakes behind him.

MAYOR

It's a kind of union - an important one, if you ask me. And it's why we've come together. Today we celebrate the beautiful mysteries of life.

APPLAUSE from the crowd.

EXT. LAKES - LATER

Now in swim suits, the entire crowd gathers around the edge of the lake, waiting. Des looks at the water nervously. She gets a HAND SQUEEZE from Bonnie, who smiles reassuringly.

It's all good.

The Mayor blows a HORN and everyone charges into the water.

INT. UNA'S PARLOR - CONTINUING

Una sullenly packs away all of the psychic bric-a-brac.

As if it never existed.

EXT. LAKES - CONTINUING

Lake shenanigans ensue, but a tentative Des holds back.

She sees the joy in Bonnie and Ava's eyes as they play.

Finally, Des submerges herself

UNDERWATER.

She's cleansed - a kind of baptism. Des holds her breath, savors the moment.

She eventually comes up for air.

ABOVE WATER,

Des closes her eyes, basking in the warmth of the sun and the good vibes.

She smiles, REBORN.

EXT. 51ST AVENUE - SUNSET

The trio returns from the festivities. They split off to their respective homes, and Des watches as Bonnie and Ava pull further away.

BONNIE
Say goodbye, Ava.

AVA
Bye Des!

Des waves/smiles.

DES (V.O.)
10...9...8...

INSERT: Des on top of Bonnie. Pinning her down. CHOKING THE LIFE OUT OF HER.

The counting pauses at '4', and Bonnie & Des now stand at their respective front porches. Bonnie scoops Ava up (almost possessively) and turns to Des.

They exchange one last, long gaze. But there's something there, behind the smiles. Something dark.

DES (V.O.)
3...2...1.

GAME. ON.

SMASH CUT TO: BLACK

EXT. 51ST AVENUE - NIGHT

Des & Bonnie's homes, both in frame. Totally dark, nothing but CRICKETS.

Suddenly, a bright red balloon - finally out of helium - falls to Earth.

It lands on Des' lawn.

CUT TO: BLACK

END