Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts in Screenwriting

By
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The graduate project of Mariana Sabeva is approved:

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I would like to express my gratitude to the Fulbright Program and the CTVA department at CSUN for giving me the opportunity to fulfill my dream and pursue a Master's degree in Screenwriting in the U.S. I would like to thank Professor Eric Edson for his mentorship and professional and personal understanding and support.

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Abstract

Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea

By

Mariana Sabeva

Master of Arts in Screenwriting

Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea is a drama that brings awareness to a growing theme in the United States - the right to die. It's an emotional character study about a terminally ill woman who chooses to have death with dignity, about the resistance she meets from her family and the Texas community, and the change she evokes in the people around her. It’s the story of her personal journey from control to surrendering in which she and we learn to accept death as an intrinsic part of life.
EXT. SOUTH AUSTIN, TEXAS - RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

A card clipped to the frame of a bicycle RATTLES against the spokes creating the only sound in the neighborhood. A GIRL (10) on a bicycle pedals through the empty street.

The Girl rides past a beautiful woman in her mid 40s who stands next to a huge potted cactus, looking at it with determination. EVA ECKHART.

We stay on the delicate but stubborn Eva as she strenuously drags the pot from one end of the flower bed to the other. Eva puts the cactus in its new place, wipes the dirt and sweat off her face and smiles, satisfied.

VERONICA (17) walks out the front door of Eva’s house, baggy sport clothes covering her athletic body.

VERONICA
Haven’t changed yet?

EVA
Maybe there’s a tree out there that will appreciate me the way I am.
(points at the cactus)
What do you think?

VERONICA
I like it better where it was.

Eva gives Veronica a “you-gotta-be-kidding-me” look.

EXT. BARTON CREEK WILDERNESS PARK - DAY

A hiking trail surrounded by a small forest. Veronica determinedly jogs up the hill. Eva trudges slowly behind her, clutching a sports bottle.

VERONICA
If I’m going to be in such debt, I should at least know what I’m going to do with the rest of my life.

EVA
(smirks)
Honey, nobody’s going to be in debt.
VERONICA
But I mean, I turn eighteen soon.

EVA
So what? Take your time.

Not exactly the answer Veronica was hoping for.

VERONICA
(annoyed)
So you don’t have any suggestions what major I should apply for?

Eva stops exhausted, squirts water into her mouth. Her phone VIBRATES from the pocket of her dirty overall. Eva takes it out, flips it open.

EVA
(into phone)
Hey. Slow down. I’ll be there.
(hangs up; to Veronica)
I have to go. Let’s hike next weekend.

VERONICA
(biting)
Thank God there’s always next weekend.

Veronica puts her headphones on.

EVA
Sweetie, don’t worry. Whatever you choose to study will be the right the thing.

VERONICA
Thanks, mom. Really original.

Before Eva can reply, Veronica turns and jogs up the hill. Eva stares after her for a moment. Then walks down the trail.

EXT. AUSTIN - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY

Eva’s ‘99 HONDA CIVIC drives through Austin. Passes by:
--a group of people going out of a neighborhood CHURCH;
--ZILKER PARK with families enjoying the summer day out;
--drives across the COLORADO RIVER.

EXT. DOWNTOWN AUSTIN - STREET - DAY

ROBERT MARTINEZ (late 30s), chubby yet in a tight dark suit, sits on the curb, drowns his sorrows in a box of cookies.

Eva sits down next to Robert, her best friend. They stare across the street at “THE ELEPHANT THEATER”, a small two-story brick building.

    EVA
    When’s the demolition slated?

    ROBERT
    End of the year.

Eva looks up at the skyscrapers towering above the theater.

    EVA
    What are they building?

    ROBERT
    A condo? A space ship? Does it matter? Ten years of my life will be destroyed so them rich kids and their poodles can shit all over these sidewalks. I wanna die.

Eva beats the crumbs out of Robert’s suit.

    EVA
    Hey. Ground control to major drama.

    ROBERT
    What are we going to do?

Eva looks at the Elephant theater, then gives Robert a reassuring smile.

    EVA
    We move on.

    ROBERT
    Where? Gale is quitting. He said he’d rather spend the money they give him on horse races than invest in theater again.
EVA
We do one last show. We make it a hit. Whatever we earn goes to rent for a new place.

Robert rolls his eyes, skeptic. He offers Eva some cookies. She takes the box but her right hand twitches and she drops it. Cookies spill onto the asphalt.

ROBERT
(shrieks)
And now this!

Eva puts the spilled cookies back in the box.

EVA
You have enough dough.

Eva pinches Robert’s belly, teasing him.

INT. EVA’S HONDA - DRIVING - DAY

Eva drives through the neighborhood. Veronica stares through the passenger seat window.

EVA
(convincing herself)
I really think that John is going to make this show a hit. Plus he played this part in Chicago. And everybody loved him. He’s handsome, he has presence. He’s just perfect.

VERONICA
Sounds like you have a crush on this guy.

Eva’s face turns red.

EVA
Just colleagues.

Veronica whips her head around to check if Eva is telling the truth. They stop at a red light. Eva massages her right hand, catches Veronica’s look.

EVA
Slept on it wrong.

Green light. Eva drives off.
EXT. AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

A school bus with a sign “Young Life Camp”. Outside the bus, principal DOROTHY MEYERS (50s), a gaunt lady who devoted her life to school and religion, welcomes the incoming students.

Eva kisses Veronica goodbye. Veronica runs over to Principal Meyers, whose golden cross necklace reflects the sunlight.

Eva gets in the car and drives off.

INT. ELEPHANT THEATER - OFFICE - DAY

Actors at the reading table, waiting, getting anxious.

LENA JONES (40s), legs over the table, holds a script and hums her lines. Next to her is MARY REYNOLDS (20s) young and sexy, also script in hands. Both women are African-American.

MARY
Anybody have a highlighter?

Lena hands Mary hers. ANDREW HILL (30), sits across Lena and Mary, breathes out a loud sigh.

ANDREW
I don’t have a whole day.

Eva ignores the actors’ buzz behind her. She stares through the window, anticipating.

Robert, who’s been sitting at the table as well, gets up and approaches Eva, fussing.

ROBERT
Why can’t we just go with someone cheaper? I don’t have a budget for a real actor.

Lena hears Robert and throws her script at him.

LENA
Bitch. We are real actors.

EVA
Stop it.
Eva lifts Lena’s script, puts it back on the table. Eva spots that Mary casually puts a cigarette in her mouth, ready to light it. Eva calmly walks to Mary, takes the cigarette out of her mouth and puts it back in the pack.

The door opens and all heads turn. It’s JOHN LEROY (40s), ponytail, unbuttoned shirt, the confidence of a lion.

Eva rushes to welcome him.

EVA
John Leroy everybody.

John grins, waves hello. Robert sticks a script in his hands.

ROBERT
Welcome.

John sits at the table, next to Mary. Eva notices but pretends she doesn’t.

INT. ELEPHANT THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Eva approaches the set builder MATT RITTER, a man in his 60s with the warm presence of Santa. Matt dismantles a flat.

EVA
We need to meet for the new show.

MATT
Yes, ma’am.

Robert shows up, looking around. He spots Eva, rushes to her.

ROBERT
I don’t have money to pay your homeboy.

EVA
Stop it. This is our last show here. It has to be perfect. John stays.

Eva contemplates for a second.

EVA
Give him my salary.
ROBERT
You’re crazy--

Eva’s eyes move from Robert to John who’s been standing behind them for who knows how long. Robert parades out, nods at John as he passes by him.

John approaches Eva, gives her a soldier salute.

JOHN
It’s a pleasure to be back under Eva Eckhart’s command.

John pierces Eva with his hypnotizing blue eyes. Nearby, Matt keeps his work dismantling the flat. He stops for a moment to check on Eva and John.

EVA
(to John)
Robert will have your contract ready tomorrow. I’ll see you then.

Eva smiles at John, holds her ground against his charm.

EXT. YOUNG LIFE CAMP - DAY

Girls vs boys SOCCER TEAMS on a broad lawn. Veronica explains a strategy to her teammates. The REFEREE gives a SIGNAL.

Veronica takes over, dribbles the ball towards the goal box. She passes to a GIRL who scores. The team cheers.

Principal Meyers watches the game. She smiles proudly.

EXT. YOUNG LIFE CAMP - LATER

Principal Meyers approaches the bench where Veronica’s team rests after the victory. Veronica spots the Principal and walks to her.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
You did a great job back there, Veronica.

VERONICA
Thanks, miss Meyers. But it was a team effort.
The Principal smiles, proud.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
With humility comes wisdom.

Veronica blushes, flattered.

EXT. AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

The school bus parks. A few students get off. Principal Meyers and Veronica step out together.

VERONICA
I wish I could come next year, too.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
You’re welcome to come back as a counselor. Have you thought about colleges yet?

Veronica and the Principal walk to the baggage compartment. The DRIVER (40s) unloads backpacks and suitcases.

VERONICA
Not really. Taking my time...

The Driver hands them their luggage.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
You should definitely study politics. America needs strong female leaders. And you have all the qualities to become one.

Veronica warms to the compliment when Eva approaches them.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Miss Eckhart, your daughter is an exceptional young woman. I was just telling her that she is born to be a leader.

EVA
That’s my girl. Little iron lady.

Eva embraces Veronica who grows awkward. Veronica exchange looks with the Principal.
EVA
(to Veronica)
Can you wait for me in the car?

VERONICA
(nods yes)
Bye, Miss Meyers.

Eva watches Veronica walking towards Eva’s Honda parked in the lot, then turns towards the Principal.

EVA
Miss Meyers, I wanted to ask you about teaching the acting class.

The Principal gives Eva a friendly smile.

EXT. EVA’S HOUSE - LATER

Eva parks the Honda in the driveway. Veronica hops out with her backpack on. Eva goes out too, grabs two bags with groceries from the backseat, locks the car.

EVA
So, seems like the Principal likes me. I’ll be teaching an acting class at your high school.

Veronica freezes. She doesn’t share her mother’s enthusiasm.

VERONICA
Why?

EVA
What do you mean? We don’t have any money. I need a second job.

They walk toward the house and enter.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Veronica keeps protesting as she helps Eva unload the groceries.
VERONICA
Why don’t you just ask dad for money?

Eva stops and turns to Veronica, a grim-serious face on.

EVA
Your father’s money is your father’s money. We’re doing great without him. Do you miss anything?

VERONICA
An iPod.

Eva forces a smile - cute, but not going to happen.

EVA
Plus, we can spend more time together if I’m teaching at the school.

Eva is about to leave the kitchen when:

VERONICA
I’m gonna go to a birthday party with Ally tonight.

EVA
Okay. Just make sure you get drunk and stoned.

VERONICA
What?

EVA
Well, you always do the opposite of what I tell you.

Veronica rolls eyes like “whatever”.

EVA
Please leave the phone number on the counter.

Eva strides out. Veronica glances at Eva’s wine stand.

EXT. WEST AUSTIN NEIGHBORHOOD - STREET - NIGHT

Veronica locks her bicycle at a street pole. ALLY (17) shows up. Ally wears a tight dress and boots, a looser outfit than Veronica’s jeans and shirt.
ALLY
Sorry I’m late.

VERONICA
You’re always late.

ALLY
Did you bring anything?

Veronica pulls a bottle of wine out of her backpack.

ALLY
(fake French accent)
Oui, oui. We be bougie.

Veronica and Ally giggle as they walk towards the house.

INT. ELEPHANT THEATER - OFFICE - NIGHT

Eva sits at the reading table, highlights paragraphs in the script in front of her.

JOHN
I think we pretty much nailed it.

Eva looks up at John who sits next to her. He’s glaring at her in a very specific way.

JOHN
You know I respect you as an artist. I wouldn’t have come to Texas for anybody else.

EVA
I know. And I appreciate your help.

John glares at Eva. Uncomfortable, she looks down at the script again when John lifts her chin up and kisses her. Stunned, Eva lets herself be swept in John’s embrace.

John lifts Eva up, sits her on the table. He pulls Eva’s blouse up. She lifts her left arm, but not the right.

JOHN
I think I can use some assistance with that. Eva. Eva?

EVA
(from under the blouse)
I can’t move my arm.
JOHN
What?
John pulls Eva’s blouse down again.

EVA
Sprained my arm.
John looks at Eva’s messy hair and panicked face. He laughs sincerely.

JOHN
You’re the same Eva from twenty years ago.
John hugs Eva, patronizingly. Beneath Eva’s smile lurks fear.

INT. BIRTHDAY PARTY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT
Arcade Fire’s Rebellion PLAYS. Teens dance, drink, smoke. Veronica drinks wine from a plastic cup, looks through a pile of magazines.

She looks over at Ally, sitting between TWO BOYS (early 20s). They all look at Veronica. Ally gets up, approaches.

ALLY
They wanna have a foursome. Tony said you’re hot.

One of the Boys, obviously Tony, winks at Veronica.

VERONICA
I would love to. But I’m going home.

ALLY
Are you trying to become a virgin again? ‘Cause according to my data you’re on the right way.

VERONICA
I just don’t feel like it, dude. It’s a waste of resources.

Ally puts her arm over Veronica’s shoulder.
ALLY
You saving juices for when you turn sixty? I knew that the Young Life camp would convert you to the dark side, Darth Virgin.

VERONICA
I hate you when you’re drunk.

ALLY
And I will always love you.

Ally goes back to her sex partners. Veronica leaves her cup and heads out, frustrated.

INT. EVA’S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Using her left arm Eva puts her numb right arm in a sling. She pinches her right arm but doesn’t feel anything.

Eva looks at herself in the mirror, scared. Walks out.

EXT. AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

First day of school. Students and teachers approach the building, Eva among them.

INT. AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - LATER

Eva, her numb arm in a sling, sits in a circle with her FIFTEEN STUDENTS.

EVA
And angry breathing.

Students breathe in and out with fury.

EVA
Now fearful breathing.

Students take a breath, pause, breath out.

EVA
Okay. And now happy breathing.

The students breathe in and out excited.
EVA
Good job, everybody. When you control your breath,
you control everything. An actor must always be in
control. Even if they seem loose and letting go,
they’re not. You control your body, your mind, your
emotions.

The bell RINGS. The students breathe out a sigh of relief. Eva laughs along with them. Her
smile disappears once the students rush out of the classroom. Eva checks her phone.

INT. EVA’S HONDA - DRIVING - DAY
Eva, moving left hand on the wheel, approaches a hospital - Texas Neuro Institute.

INT. TEXAS NEURO INSTITUTE - DAY
--A female NURSE takes Eva’s blood for examination.
--Eva’s body enters an MRI machine.
--Eva lies on a patient couch sideways. A male DOCTOR performs a spinal tap on her.

INT. ELEPHANT THEATER - STAGE - DAY
Eva sits in the empty auditorium watching John and Mary rehearse.

On stage - John approaches Mary with a sneaky smile.

    JOHN
    “Right in the middle of the Monday morning
    conference I began to feel sexy.”

    MARY
    “That’s marvellous.”

Mary and John kiss.

In the auditorium - the sound of a VIBRATING PHONE. Eva rummages through her bag.
The vibrating stops. Eva finds her phone, looks at it.
EVA
(to Mary and John)
I’ll be right back.

On stage - Mary gives Eva thumbs up.

Eva takes her phone and moves further away from the stage. She turns around on the sound of GIGGLING. On stage - John tickles Mary’s waist and she chuckles.

Eva calls back. She stares at John and Mary flirting on stage, while listening to her phone.

INT. NEURO INSTITUTE - DR GREENBERG’S OFFICE - DAY

Eva, tight and nervous, sits on a couch. Next to her is DR GREENBERG (60s), holding a folder of test results.

GREENBERG
(calm and cautious)
So, Eva. Your thyroid levels are normal. I have your muscle biopsy and the MRI results ready, too.

EVA
Brain tumor, isn’t it? I knew that thinking too much has a price.

GREENBERG
(laughs)
No, you don’t have a brain tumor. But we did notice some degeneration in certain brain cells.

Greenberg reaches to his desk and grabs a blank piece of paper. He starts drawing a sketch of Eva.

GREENBERG
Let’s say this is you. You have the motor neurons that connect the brain with the spinal cord and the spinal cord with the muscles. When the motor neurons die, the brain can no longer control voluntary muscle movement.

Greenberg leaves his doodle on the table in front of Eva.

EVA
Is this why my arm is numb? My brain just let it go?
Greenberg smiles soothingly. It’s hard for him as well.

GREENBERG
(nods)
Eva, you have amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. ALS. Maybe you’ve heard it as Lou Gherig’s disease.

Eva nods, shocked.

GREENBERG
You need to remember that ALS is a pretty variable disease.

EVA
So what’s the worst case scenario?

Dr. Greenberg looks at Eva, hesitant. She struggles to remain in control.

EVA
I can take it.

GREENBERG
What happened to your right arm might happen with the rest of your body. At a later stage your swallowing and breathing muscles might get affected as well.
(pauses)
A majority of the ALS death cases are caused by respiratory failure.

Eva is frozen still on the couch, processing. A lonely tear is about to leave her eye but Eva rapidly wipes it away. As if it never occurred.

EVA
How much time do I have?

GREENBERG
It’s hard to tell. Could be half a year, five years. Life expectancy usually runs between two and five years but there are many patients who survive longer than that.
EVA
How many?

DOCTOR GREENBERG
Around four percent.

EVA
You’ve chosen the wrong profession, Doctor Greenberg.

Greenberg is puzzled. Eva points at his doodle of Eva’s body.

EVA
This piece here is more touching than most modern art I’ve seen.

GREENBERG
Thank you, Eva. Retirement is close, who knows maybe I can really change my profession. (beat) Here’s some materials I prepared for you.

Greenberg hands Eva a folder.

GREENBERG
You might consider changing your insurance plan. The hospice care and treatment are very expensive.

EVA
The only money I have right now is my daughter’s college savings and I’m not touching it.

Eva suddenly gets up. Looks like she’s in a hurry.

EVA
Thank you, Doctor Greenberg. Back to work now. (nervous laugh) Can I keep this? (re: the doodle)

GREENBERG
Sure. Please, call me if you need anything. I would like to see you again next week.

Eva smiles bitterly and nods as she exits Greenberg’s office.
INT. EVA’S HONDA - PARKED - NIGHT

Eva gets in the car, holds Doctor Greenberg’s doodle of her dying body, stares at it. She looks around - there’s almost no cars left in the hospital parking lot.

Eva starts the engine.

INT. RESIDENTIAL BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Eva arrives in front of an apartment door. Rings the bell. Seconds later the door opens - naked from the waist up, John is surprised to see Eva.

JOHN

Hey--

John doesn’t have time to say anything more as Eva steps forward and kisses him. She stops herself, looks up at him. John grins, lifts Eva in the air.

Eva’s bag falls on the ground, and the ALS materials drop out of it. John shuts the door.

INT. JOHN’S APARTMENT - MORNING

Eva wakes up. She looks to her left where John sleeps with his back against her. She slowly gets up. Her arm sling, as well as her clothes are scattered on the floor.

Eva grabs the clothes and the sling with her moving arm and sneaks out.

INT. EVA’S HONDA - DRIVING - DAY

Eva drives, Veronica in the passenger seat.

VERONICA

I don’t get it. Why do you want me to see him?

EVA

You need to spend more time together.

VERONICA

Uh-huh. But why? I mean we spend time together. He’s just so...
EVA
Aloof?

VERONICA
Boring.

EVA
You need to lower your bar. He’s just a man after all. That’s why the universe provided you with a great mother.

Veronica stares at Eva’s right arm in the sling.

VERONICA
When is your arm going to be okay?

EVA
Soon.

EXT. BARTON HILLS - DEREK’S HOUSE - DAY

Two story house with a vast and beautifully decorated front yard. DEREK MCCAULEY (50), cowboy boots and ragged jeans, Texas premium, charming in an aged way, attaches a new tool bed in the back of his Chevy truck.

Eva’s Honda parks in the street. Eva and Veronica hop out and walk to Derek.

VERONICA
How’s it going?

Derek’s face lights up and he approaches Veronica for a hug.

DEREK
Hey, darling.

Veronica walks past her father and rushes in the house. Derek SIGHS, then turns to Eva, spots the sling.

DEREK
Driving with a broken arm?

EVA
I don’t really need two arms.
DEREK
You definitely need two to drive. That’s illegal.

Eva looks around the front yard, a shade of jealousy in her eyes. Derek’s garden looks better than hers.

DEREK
So, how’s your theater going?

EVA
Good. They’re demolishing our building in a few months. Building another high rise. But it’s fine. We’ll just move somewhere else.
(pause)
How about you? Still with Barbara?

DEREK
Yep. As I was last month, and last year--

EVA
So touchy. I was just checking on your well being.

Eva heads back to the car. Stops and turns.

EVA
Try to, you know, talk to her. Don’t be such a fish.

Eva looks at Derek one last time, then hops in her car.

EXT. BARTON CREEK WILDERNESS PARK - DAY

Eva is at the same hiking spot where she almost hiked with Veronica. She looks up at the hill determined.

Eva climbs up, panting. Her body aches, her breath is short. Eva sways around, almost falls. A male HIKER (20s) passing by rushes to help her.

HIKER
You okay, ma’am?

EVA
(barks at him)
I’m fine.
The Hiker steps back, startled. Eva softens.

EVA
I’m... I’m okay, really. Thanks.

The Hiker continues up the trail. Eva breathes heavily, stares up the hill.

She slowly heads back down the trail.

INT. EVA’S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The ALS materials are scattered over the table. Eva stares at a medical bill, sits back in her chair helpless. She wipes away all the bills and leaflets to the floor, frustrated.

Eva goes to the TV stand, draws a finger over it. Looks at the dust on her finger tip, then looks around - the room doesn’t seem dirty but in Eva’s eyes it’s a hell of a mess.

INT. EVA’S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Eva has brought in a dozen detergents and rags. She aggressively cleans everything with her moving arm.

Veronica enters the room.

VERONICA
What are you doing?

EVA
It’s so dusty in here. I can’t breathe.

Eva, focused on cleaning the dust that only she can see, doesn’t notice that Veronica has stopped by the table and reads the ALS materials scattered on the floor.

EVA
Did you have fun with your father?

As no answer follows, Eva turns to look at her daughter and freezes. Veronica holds the ALS leaflets.

VERONICA
Mom. You’re sick?
EVA
It only sounds bad.

VERONICA
Did you tell dad? Grandma?

EVA
No need to worry other people.

VERONICA
They’re not “people”. It’s family.

Eva sighs, she leaves the rag, sits down on the couch. A moment of honest weakness.

EVA
Please don’t tell anybody, for now. Not even Ally. I’ll figure it out.

Veronica moves next to her.

VERONICA
Mom. Everything will be okay.

Veronica hugs Eva and misses seeing the worry in Eva’s eyes.

INT. ELEPHANT THEATER COMPANY - STAGE - DAY

Eva approaches the deserted stage, the set of a house half built. She sits on a chair in the middle of the stage. Slips her shoes off, slowly moves her toes. Closes her eyes.

ROBERT (O.S.)
You coming with us for drinks?

Startled, Eva opens her eyes to see Robert on stage.

EVA
I’ll be there in a minute.

Robert disappears backstage. Eva puts her shoes back on.
INT. MOONSHINE PATIO BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

Eva sits at a table alone. A few feet away from her Lena, Andrew and John play pool. Eva stares at the bubbles in her glass of Coke, lost in her thoughts.

John leaves the pool stick, goes to check on Eva.

JOHN
What’s up, grouchy? Wanna play later?

Not clear if John means the pool table or his bed.

EVA
I’m good, thanks.

John shrugs shoulders, goes back to the pool table. Eva takes her bag, heads to the exit.

On her way out Eva bumps into Robert who steps out of the rest room.

EVA
Please tell the others I had to leave. I don’t feel like saying goodbye.

Eva strides past Robert. He stares after her, baffled.

INT. EVA’S HONDA - DRIVING - NIGHT

Red light. The wipers rapidly move as the rain comes down hard. Eva makes a right a turn when --

A PEDESTRIAN pops up in front of the car.

Eva fails to hit the brakes with her right leg, she veers the car, manages to hit the brakes with her left foot at the last moment.

Eva looks down at her right leg - trembling. She looks outside - the Pedestrian SHOUTS obscenities. Eva, shocked and scared, rolls down her window. Rain pours in. The Pedestrian notices Eva’s numb arm in a sling.

PEDESTRIAN
Are your legs broken, too?

Cars HONK behind Eva’s Honda and the Pedestrian is forced to walk off.
Eva pulls over. She looks up John’s contact in her cell. She dials, but immediately hangs up. She looks at her legs, then the road.

Eva turns off the engine, takes her umbrella and gets out.

A cab approaches. Eva can’t stop it as her moving hand holds the umbrella. The cab passes her.

EVA
Fuck.

Eva walks off in the rain. Her phone VIBRATES from inside her bag but Eva doesn’t pick up.

INT. EVA’S BEDROOM - DAY

The overwhelming ROAR of an ancient engine wakes up Eva. Eva moans as she gets up and goes to the window.

EVA
No, no, no!

Eva puts a dressing-gown on and rushes out.

EXT. EVA’S HOUSE - DAY

At the curb - STELLA (70), mom jeans and a picturesque Yosemite sweatshirt, and ED (70), overalls with pockets full of pens, flashlights, knives, totter out from an old RV parked in front of the house.

Eva runs out the door.

EVA
What are you doing here?

VERONICA (O.S.)
I told them.

Veronica has shown up at the doorstep, too, PJs on.

STELLA
My sweet girls. Give me a kiss.
Eva reluctantly hugs Stella. Veronica kisses her grandmother.

EVA
Hi, Ed.

ED
What?

EVA
(shouts)
I said “hello”.

ED
Oh. Hi, darling.

STELLA
(to Veronica)
Sweetie, come help your grandfather.

Veronica rushes to Ed who drags two bags out of the RV.

EVA
Guest room is full of stuff.

STELLA
(re: the RV)
We have our home. That’s just presents. I got twenty pounds of black elderberry that cure all bacterial infections.

EVA
I don’t have an infection, mom.

STELLA
We have plenty of time to discuss it. You’re not working in your condition, are you? God, we haven’t seen each other for ages. We have to tell you about the elk in Maine.

The procession of Stella, Ed and Veronica enters the house. Eva, annoyed, follows them.
INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

On the couch - Ed watches "THE PRICE IS RIGHT" on TV, VOLUME PUMPED UP. Veronica finishes her breakfast next to him.

At the table. Stella hands Eva a CUP OF TEA. Eva takes a sip, her tongue scrunches. She gives the tea back to her mother.

   STELLA
   Eva Diane Eckhart, drink your tea.

   EVA
   No. Not gonna happen, mom. I love you guys and I’ll be happy to have you here for a few days but that’s it. Can somebody please turn the TV down?

   STELLA
   You know Ed loves The Price is Right. We went to a live taping in Hollywood. Ed was in heaven. The person sitting next to us was--

   EVA
   (interrupting)
   Did you hear what I just said?

   STELLA
   Family and love cures everything.

   EVA
   There is no cure. Mom. No cure.

Eva shuts up as Veronica passes by with her empty plate.

   EVA
   I’ll be right back.

Eva stands up and exits the living room.

EXT. EVA'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Eva sits on the bench, trying to get her head on straight.

Veronica goes out and sits next to her.
VERONICA
I read everything about ALS.

Veronica takes Eva’s moving hand.

VERONICA
I know how you feel. I would feel the same way. Don’t be afraid to talk to me about it.

But all Eva can say is:

EVA
You’re my best friend.

Veronica and Eva hold hands. A HUMMING BIRD hovers in front of them for a moment, then flies away.

INT. AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL’S OFFICE - DAY

Veronica enters timidly. Principal Meyers is at her desk.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Hey there. I usually don’t do this for students but... Have a look.

The Principal hands Veronica a printed list of universities.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
I think George Washington should be your top choice. The best place for a person of your potential.

VERONICA
Wow. Thank you so much.

Veronica’s cell BEEPS with a text. Veronica peeks at it.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
It’s okay. Do your thing.

The Principal notices the change in Veronica’s face.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Is everything okay? You seem worried lately?
VERONICA
Yeah. It’s just... I’m fine.

Veronica waves goodbye at the Principal, heads out.

INT. AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL - REST ROOM - DAY

Veronica cautiously enters. Looks around - it’s empty.

VERONICA
Ally?

ALLY (O.S.)
Here.

Veronica approaches the toilet stalls.

VERONICA
Dude, are you pooping?

Ally opens the door of one of the stalls. She’s sitting on the toilet, yet she’s fully dressed. Veronica enters.

ALLY
I’m in serious shit.

Ally bends down, makes sure there’s nobody in the neighboring stalls. Then she shows Veronica a pregnancy test - positive.

VERONICA
Jesus. Is it...

Veronica remembers the night of the party.

VERONICA
Both of them?

Ally shrugs shoulders, uncomfortable.

ALLY
I only have $200 saved. I need another 300 for the abortion. Can you ask your mom, please? I’ll give it back to you a.s.a.p.
Ally and Veronica hear the door open followed by FOOT STEPS.

    ALLY
    (whispering)
    Please, dude. My mom will kill me if she learns.

Ally hugs Veronica. Veronica sighs.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Two construction workers, JAVIER (20s) and MANUEL (40s) stare at Eva’s back as she enters the construction site.

    JAVIER
    (catcalls)
    ‘Sup girl!

Eva turns abruptly, kills Javier with her look. Manuel elbows Javier - he shouldn’t mess with that woman.

Manuel runs over to Eva, hands her a hard hat.

INT. DEREK’S TRAILER - DAY

Eva enters, looks around. A desk and a couch constitute the furniture of Derek’s temporary office. Eva approaches the desk, looks at an old PHOTO of her, Derek and baby Veronica.

    DEREK (O.S.)
    I need a new one.

Eva hurriedly puts the photo back on the desk. Derek walks next to her, takes the photo, studies it.

    EVA
    You can just cut me out of it.

    DEREK
    I meant a recent photo of Veronica. She’s a young woman already.

Eva shoe gazes in silence.
DEREK
She told me. How do you feel?

EVA
I’m good. I’m having a gathering tonight. Seven at home. Can you come?

DEREK
Sure. If you need any help, you know, with anything-

EVA
Thanks. I don’t need help. See you tonight.

Eva forces a smile and rushes out. Derek stares at her perplexed.

EXT. AUSTIN METRORAIL STATION - DAY
Eva slowly climbs up the stairs leading to the train.

INT. AUSTIN METRORAIL TRAIN - DAY
Eva sits alone in the train car, stares through the window.

INT. EVA’S BEDROOM - NIGHT
The room is dark. Eva sits on the edge of her bed. Eva closes her eyes, takes a deep breath - a moment of self affirmation.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT
Stella orchestrates Ed and Veronica who stir, cut, grate.

STELLA
(to Ed)
I said cubes! It doesn’t even sound like circles.
(to Veronica)
Sweetie, watch for the carrots.

Eva hesitantly enters the kitchen, stops, looks around the culinary show, terrified.
EVA
I said I want to talk to you guys.

Eva walks over to the stove, sneaks a peek in the three pots.

EVA
(to Stella)
Why do you have to make everything so complicated?

STELLA
Food isn’t complicated. People need to eat.

Eva makes room for Stella who throws vegetables in a pan.

DEREK (O.S.)
Hey.

Derek has entered the kitchen.

STELLA
What is he doing here?!

EVA
I invited him.

DEREK
Hello, Stella.
(raises voice)
How’s it going, Ed?

ED
Look who the milkman dropped off.

Ed grabs two beers from the fridge, hands one to Derek. In the middle of the chaos, Eva grows anxious.

EVA
Now can we just sit down for a moment?

VERONICA
(to Stella)
Grandma, what do I do with the ginger?
STELLA
Mix it with lemon and pepper.
(to Eva)
Nobody talks on empty stomachs.
You need to develop some patience if you want to
fight that ALS.

EVA
Hey, damn it...

VERONICA
Mom, sorry.

Eva steps aside so Veronica can pass with a huge pot. Stella grabs the beer from Ed’s hand.

STELLA
Enough recreation time.
(to Eva)
Please pass me the salt.

Eva takes the salt, pauses for a second, then suddenly throws it on the ground. Salt and
glass fly everywhere. Everybody looks at Eva.

EVA
Can we pause for a second, people?

STELLA
You’re right. Time for a break.

Eva gathers herself, takes a deep breath, opens her mouth--

STELLA
I want to make an announcement.

Stella takes Ed’s hand.

EVA
What--

STELLA
After fifteen years on the road, we’re giving up the
nomadic life. We’re staying in Austin.
(to Eva)
(MORE)
From now on I’ll be your personal assistant. And Ed will be my assistant.

EVA
You’re seventy years old.

STELLA
That’s ageist. Anyway, Ed and I will take care of you, Veronica will help in between semesters. I promise you--

EVA
Shut up. Please. Shut up. I don’t need personal assistants. I...

Eva is trembling. Takes a deep breath.

EVA
I have a terminal disease. I’m dying. And my body is going to slowly give up. I don’t want to spend my last days in a cage, not able to eat, not able to wipe my own ass. Not even able to tell you that I love you.

Stella opens her mouth, but Eva gestures at her to wait.

EVA
(to Veronica)
I know it’s hard for you. Truth is, I can’t escape my death. But I can choose when to die. And how.

Everybody is frozen silent. Ed looks around confused.

ED
What did she say?

STELLA
(shouts)
She wants to kill herself.

ED
Oh...

VERONICA
Seriously?
EVA
I need you to understand me--

VERONICA
You want to commit suicide.

EVA
It’s not suicide. It’s death with dignity. And it’s legal in Oregon. We can move there for a few months. University of Oregon is a great--

VERONICA
I’m going to D.C.

Beat.

EVA
Well... That’s news to me.

VERONICA
But you know what? Feel free to go to Oregon by yourself. I’m not going to keep you company while you wait to kill yourself.

Veronica flees out and slams the kitchen door. Eva wants to follow, but Derek stops her.

DEREK
No. Give her some time.

STELLA
How can you choose death? Didn’t you learn from your father? Death is awful - you should completely avoid it.

A pot overboils on the stove. Stella rushes to turn it off.

STELLA
(to Ed)
I told you to watch it.

ED
No, you didn’t.

EVA
Get out. Please. Both of you.
Stella sighs, takes Ed by the arm and they exit the kitchen.

Eva sighs, looks around the mess of glass and salt.

EVA
(to Derek)
You need to talk to her.

DEREK
I will.

EVA
You have a smoke?

Derek looks at Eva surprised. He nods yes.

EXT. EVA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Eva and Derek sit on the front porch. Derek lights Eva a cigarette, coughs like a teenager.

DEREK
How do you expect Veronica to react to her mother wanting to die?

Eva disgusted by the smoke, hands the cigarette to Derek.

EVA
Her mother will die anyway. I don’t want to go to Oregon without her. I’ll think of something here.

DEREK
You should stop talking about dying like that. People won’t understand you. Not in Texas.

EVA
Do you understand me, Derek?

Derek sighs, looks away from Eva when he spots something. He points at the RV. Stella and Ed spying behind the curtain.

DEREK
I’m trying.

Derek throws his cigarette on the porch, steps on it.
INT. EVA’S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Eva sits at the table in front of her laptop. Veronica comes in, leaves her backpack on the floor, sits at the table also.

EVA
Hey, sweetie.

Stella rushes in with a plate of pancakes, Ed follows her.

EVA
Guys, you shouldn’t have.

Ed sits in between Eva and Veronica. Stella serves pancakes to Eva and Veronica. Ed is left with an empty plate.

STELLA
(to Eva)
Sure we should have. Look at you, a skeleton.

EVA
Not yet, mom.

Veronica, ignoring Eva so far, gives her an annoyed look.

VERONICA
I’m not hungry anymore. Later.

Veronica grabs her backpack and leaves. Ed steals a pancake from Veronica’s plate. Eva stares after her daughter.

INT. AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Eva’s students enter the classroom and sit down. Eva sets up a DVD in front. Ally shows up at the door, enters shyly.

ALLY
Hi, Miss Eckhart. Is it okay if I join your class? I know it’s kinda late, but...

Eva smiles, pleasantly surprised.

EVA
Of course. Come in.
INT. AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - LATER

Veronica strides through the hallway. She stops at the sight of Eva and Ally walking out of the classroom, LAUGHING.

Eva waves bye to Ally, walks off in the opposite direction. Ally spots Veronica and approaches her.

ALLY
I wish my mom was as cool as yours.
(lowers voice)
Did you ask her about the cash?

Veronica’s face is stone cold.

VERONICA
I think you should keep the baby.

ALLY
What?

VERONICA
I’m not helping you kill a human being. Fucking two guys without a condom was your mistake, and you should take responsibility for it.

ALLY
Dude, are you serious?

VERONICA
I’m your best friend and in this case I know what’s good for you.

ALLY
You’re acting like an arrogant bitch right now.

VERONICA
Better than an ignorant slut.

Veronica turns and walks off. Ally shouts after her.

ALLY
Fuck you. At least I can make my own choices.
Tears gather in Veronica’s eyes. She starts running. She goes down the stairs, makes a turn and--

Veronica bumps into Principal Meyers and falls to the ground. The Principal’s lunch, a salad, scatters over Veronica.

Veronica looks up at the Principal, embarrassed. The Principal helps Veronica stand up.

INT. PRINCIPAL MEYERS OFFICE - DAY

Veronica gazes down, avoids eye contact with the Principal who sits across from her.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
I want to help you but I need to know what’s going on.

The Principal stands up, moves her chair next to Veronica.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Veronica, is somebody bullying you?

VERONICA
No.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
You know you can trust me.

VERONICA
It’s my mother. She was diagnosed with ALS a month ago.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Oh dear, I’m so sorry.

VERONICA
And yesterday she told us that she’ll commit suicide before she becomes completely paralyzed. She even asked me to move with her to Oregon where it’s legal.

Beat.
PRINCIPAL MEYERS
You’re not going with her, right?

VERONICA
No! Of course not. I don’t want her to do this.

Principal Meyers SIGHS, contemplates for a moment.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Your mother is not thinking clearly. But we’re going to help her.

A hopeful smiles appears on the face of Veronica. The Principal nods encouragingly.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Derek approaches a DOZEN WORKERS on their lunch break. Among them is Javier who catcalled Eva at her visit. Derek taps him on the shoulder.

DEREK
Hey buddy.

Javier looks at Derek worried. They move away from the group.

DEREK
I wanted to ask you a few questions about your aunt’s death.

Javier is relieved that he’s in no trouble. He nods at Derek.

INT. DEREK’S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Derek is on the phone, walks back and forth.

DEREK
(into phone)
Can you give me the contact of somebody in Texas?

BARBARA (late 30s), a blond Southern beauty, enters the frond door. She throws her bag on a chair, approaches Derek, kisses him on the cheek.

Derek smiles at Barbara nervously as he writes down a number.
DEREK
(into phone)
Thanks. Have a good one.
(hangs up)
Hey, babe.

BARBARA
Don’t tell me you called the cable guys finally.

DEREK
I will. Promise.

Barbara points at her eyes, then at Derek’s. She goes out. Derek waits for her to leave, then
dials a number again. Off of Derek’s determined face.

INT. ELEPHANT THEATER - AUDITORIUM - DAY

Robert is in the dark auditorium. On stage John, Lena, Mary and Andrew are about to
begin rehearsals.

Eva, also on stage, gives last directions to the actors.

EVA
Mary, you need to let it loose. You go up to John and-
-
Eva approaches John but her right foot tilts and she reels about. John catches her before
she falls. Robert rushes on stage.

EVA
I’m fine. I’m okay.

Eva frees herself from John.

ROBERT
You don’t seem okay.

Robert and the actors gape at Eva, expecting answers. She sighs - seems like she can’t hide
the truth anymore.

EVA
Well, guys, I have ALS. Terminal.
JOHN

What?!

Robert starts LAUGHING.

INT. ELEPHANT THEATER - HALLWAY - SIMULTANEOUS

Derek hesitantly walks in. He's a fish-out-of-water in this place. He looks around, hears Robert’s laughter coming from the auditorium, heads there.

INT. ELEPHANT THEATER - STAGE - SAME

Robert’s laughter slowly fades away.

ROBERT
You’re not joking. What... What’s going to happen?

Eva casually introduces everybody to her situation.

EVA
My muscles will atrophy. But I’m not going to wait till then. I plan to die before that, here in Texas. So if anybody has ideas, I’m all ears.

Eva smiles at Robert and the actors who stare at her shocked. Robert is the first to let the tears out. He goes next to Eva and embraces her tightly.

ROBERT
No!

Everybody else joins Robert in a group hug. Underneath, Eva struggles to break free when she spots Derek standing silent in the auditorium.

EVA
Guys, don’t choke me yet, please.

Robert and the others let go of Eva.

EVA
Excuse me.

Eva takes advantage and walks over to Derek.
EVA
What’s up?

DEREK
Outside.

Derek and Eva go out into the--

INT. ELEPHANT THEATER - HALLWAY

DEREK
I found you a death consultant.

Eva shakes head confused.

DEREK
There’s this man in Conroe. I can give you a ride there but we have to go now. He’s leaving Texas tomorrow.

EVA
I thought you didn’t want to help me ‘cause you’ll get in trouble.

DEREK
Do you want me to drive you or not?

John enters the hallway from the auditorium. John and Derek size each other up.

John puts his arm around Eva’s waist, leans towards her.

JOHN
Can I talk to you for a second?

DEREK
(to Eva)
Do your thing.

Derek gives John a skeptical look, then exits the theater.

JOHN
What the hell was that?

EVA
He’s my ex husband--
JOHN  
No. Why didn’t you tell me you’re sick? I deserve to know if you’re going to die.

Eva studies John for a moment. His narcissism is exceptional but she has more important things to deal with.

EVA  
I’ve been busy.

Eva strides outside, where Derek waits for her.

EXT. ELEPHANT THEATER - DAY  
Derek helps Eva get in his Chevy truck. They drive off.

INT. BURGER KING - DAY  
Eva stands in line, looks around the dining area. She spots a COUPLE in their 50s. The WOMAN feeds her HUSBAND with fries lovingly. She wipes the ketchup from his chin with a napkin.

EXT. REST STOP IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - DAY  
Derek finishes his cigarette outside his Chevy truck. Eva shows up with a huge Burger King bag full of everything.

INT. DEREK’S CHEVY - DRIVING - DAY  
Eva stares through the window at the endless flat fields, turned yellow as a sign of the autumn’s arrival.

Derek drives with the whole bag of fries and burgers in his lap. He offers Eva a fry but she shakes head no.

EXT. CONROE, TEXAS - CITY PARK - DAY  
Derek parks on the street, hops out, then helps Eva step out.
Eva looks around, worried. She spots a skinny MAN in his 60s sitting on a bench nearby. The Man who has the air of a mummy spots Eva and pierces her with his empty look.

       EVA
       I’m not sure what we’re doing here.

Before Derek could reply, PETE JOHNSON (late 30s), jeans and sweater, holding a Beagle on a leash, shows up next to them.

       PETE
       Derek and Eva?

Eva smiles relieved, gives Pete her left hand and they shake.

EXT. CONROE, TEXAS - CITY PARK - LATER

Eva and Pete sit on a bench, watch Derek nearby who plays with the German Shepherd.

       EVA
       Thank you for meeting us.

       PETE
       I’m glad I can help.

       EVA
       So, let’s get morbid. What death options do you have for me?

INT. DEREK’S CHEvy - Driving - Dusk

Derek drives back on the 35 freeway. Eva, stares at the orange sky.

       EVA
       I think Mexico is my thing. Once the time comes, I go to Monterrey, buy the pentobarbital and come back. Swallowing a deadly drug sounds peaceful and easy. Better than strangling, or helium.

       DEREK
       (laughs)
       Helium? What would that be like - death by funny voice?
Eva chuckles as she keeps looking at the setting sun.

INT. DEREK’S CHEVY - DRIVING - NIGHT

Derek drives through Downtown Austin. Eva’s face suddenly lights up - she has an idea.

EVA
Turn on Red River.

Derek turns, then pulls over. He looks outside - the flashing sign of STUBB’S BAR-B-Q.

DEREK
Forget it. Not going in there.

EVA
I’m sure nobody remembers you.

Ouch. Expressionless, Derek drives off.

EVA
Come on. You were playing in Stubb’s like ages ago.
Plus, it used to be our place.
(a beat)
You don’t even know if I’ll be alive a year from now.

Eva patiently waits for her manipulation to kick in. Derek keeps driving, contemplating.

INT. STUBB’S BAR-B-Q - NIGHT

Derek and Eva walk in hesitantly, as if they enter a museum. They look around with curiosity and trepidation.

Eva spots the old jukebox machine and they stop by it. She touches the colorful buttons. She looks at Derek who flips through the records.

INT. STUBB’S BAR-B-Q - LATER

Derek and Eva at a remote table. A WAITRESS (19) serves Derek a beer and Eva a glass of wine and leaves. Derek glances at the wine, concerned.
EVA
It’s only one glass of wine.

DEREK
I remember a lot of horrible things that began with this statement.

Eva gets a straw and tries to open it, but it’s difficult with one arm. Derek does it for her.

DEREK
To safe exits.

Derek taps Eva’s glass with his. De Eva beams.

MAN (O.S.)
Give it up for Thursday night karaoke! Starting with Eva and Derek.

DEREK
You didn’t...

Eva gets up, grabs Derek by the arm, pulls him towards the tiny stage. The soft guitar of NEIL YOUNG’S HARVEST MOON plays. Eva hands Derek a microphone. He softens. For the good old times.

EVA & DEREK
(singing)
“Come a little bit closer,/ hear what I have to say./
Just like children sleepin’,/ we could dream this night away.”

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

--Eva and Derek drink more

--change bars

--Eva enters a tattoo studio; chooses the cheesiest tattoo of a sparrow from the catalogue; gets the tattoo done on her numb arm

END OF MONTAGE
EXT. TATTOO STUDIO - NIGHT

Eva and Derek exit the studio LAUGHING. Derek checks his phone - “10 MISSED CALLS”. The smile vanishes from his face, he hits call back.

DEREK
Hey, love.

With the word “love” Eva’s laughter fades away. She’s brought back to reality where she and Derek are divorced.

BARBARA (V.O.)
Where the fuck are you?

DEREK
Downtown.
(looks at Eva)
With Eva.

A freezing pause.

BARBARA (V.O.)
You’re drunk. I’ll come pick you up.

DEREK
I’ll take a cab.

BARBARA (V.O.)
No, no. Allow me the pleasure to meet your ex wife again. Send me the address.

Derek hangs up, looks at Eva bitterly - fun time is over.

EXT. TATTOO STUDIO - LATER

Derek and Eva sit on the curb. Barbara parks her Ford Sedan. Derek helps Eva get up and they get in the car.

INT. BARBARA’S FORD SEDAN - NIGHT

Awkward silence. Eva, drunk and guilty, in the backseat.
EVA
Barb, Derek was just helping me. I asked him. I don’t know if you know, but I have this disease and--

BARBARA
I know the whole story.

Judgment spreads all over Barbara’s face as she pulls over in front of Eva’s house.

EXT. EVA’S HOUSE - NIGHT

Eva walks towards the house. Ed’s SNORING echoes from the RV. Eva looks up at Veronica’s room - the lights are still on.

INT. VERONICA’S ROOM - NIGHT

Eva hesitantly enters to find Veronica on her knees, holding a bible, mumbling a prayer. Eva soberly up instantly.

EVA
What’s that?

VERONICA
Your life was given to you and you don’t have the right to take it away.

EVA
Sweetie, you’re so much smarter than this. Who stuffed your head with that fanatic horse shit?

VERONICA
(sniffs at the air)
You can’t drink. You have fucking ALS--

EVA
Watch your mouth!

Veronica jumps under her bed sheets, turns away from Eva.

Eva, angry yet helpless, exits the room.
EXT. DEREK’S HOUSE - PATIO - SAME

Derek smokes. Next to him, Barbara stands like a night watchman.

DEREK
Veronica needs me to be a part of Eva’s life.

BARBARA
And I suppose there’ll be some last minute sudden recovery. You’re letting yourself be manipulated by that woman.

Barbara turns and enters the house.

INT. EVA’S HONDA - DRIVING - DAY

Veronica drives, Eva in the passenger seat, as alert as a mother could be. Veronica is about to make a right turn.

EVA
You need to come to a complete stop first. Stop.
Stop!

Veronica hits the brakes.

VERONICA
I heard you.

EVA
It takes only one mistake.

(beat)
You know I love you more than anything. I’m sure you’ll understand me if you give me a chance to explain--

VERONICA
I don’t want to talk.

They approach Austin High School.
Teachers of all ages sit around the room, Eva among them. Leaning over the teacher’s desk is Principal Meyers. She goes over a few pages, finishing the agenda for the month.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
By the way, we got approved to change the cafeteria menu. Finally.

Teachers give Principal Meyers a BRIEF APPLAUSE.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
One last thing before we go. Eva Eckhart. Where’s Eva?

Eva looks around perplexed, lifts her moving hand.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
There she is. I would like to ask you all to join me in a prayer. Miss Eckhart needs our support. She recently learned she’s suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

OH-s and AH-s around the room. People comfort Eva but she grows more and more uncomfortable with every “I’m so sorry”.

Principal Meyers closes eyes, locks hands for a prayer. Everybody else does the same. Eva, however, keeps her eyes wide open, looks around the room shocked.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Dear Lord, I ask you to turn this weakness into strength, suffering into compassion, sorrow into joy, and pain into comfort. May your servant Eva trust in your goodness, even in the middle of this suffering, as she waits for your healing touch. Amen.

EVERYBODY
Amen.

Principal Meyers opens her eyes, gives Eva a compassionate smile. Eva, full of anger, is more than certain who’s influencing Veronica.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Thank you, everybody. Our next meeting is on the 17th.
A few people approach Eva, but she hurries to reach the Principal before she exits.

EVA
I don’t believe in prayers. And neither does my daughter whom you’re trying to brainwash--

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
(interrupts; polite)
Please keep your suicidal ideas away from our children.

Before Eva could say anything at all, the Principal exits. Eva strides out furious.

INT. AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY
Veronica paces along when she gets a text message from Eva.

INSERT:

“WHERE ARE YOU?”
Veronica sighs, then types in a reply. INSERT:

“HEY, SMTH CAME UP. CAN YOU TAKE A CAB HOME?”
Veronica puts her phone back in her backpack, takes out her Bible and enters the Principal’s office.

INT. EVÁ’S HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT
Eva goes through a pile of clothes near the washing machine. Veronica parks the car, exits. Eva lifts a blouse.

EVA
Do you want this?

Veronica approaches, looks at the blouse.

VERONICA
No.
EVA
Okay. I’m donating it then.

Eva puts the blouse in a box. She keeps looking through the rest of the clothes. Veronica is about to enter the house.

EVA
(keep sorting out clothes)
So you teamed up with Meyers against me?

VERONICA
I don’t know what you’re talking about. Nobody is against you--

EVA
Your guru told the whole faculty, all seventy eight teachers, about my disease.

VERONICA
So? She didn’t lie.

Eva leaves the clothes for a moment, takes a deep breath.

EVA
You can’t discuss our personal matters with a stranger.

VERONICA
Miss Meyers understands me and supports me. She has faith that you’ll get well if we pray for you every day.

Eva has bristled up like a she-wolf ready to fight for her territory.

EVA
You shouldn’t see this woman anymore. She’s stuffing your head with unnecessary nonsense--

VERONICA
You can’t control my life.

EVA
I raised you, I pay your bills and you’re still living under my roof.
VERONICA
Well, it’s not going to be for too long--

Eva SLAPS Veronica. Apparently Eva’s moving arm turns out to be stronger than she thought. Veronica touches her cheek, then runs into the house.

INT. EVA’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Eva tosses and turns. Opens her eyes. Stares in the darkness.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Eva, pyjamas and a sleeping top, drowsily walks into the room with a cup of hot coffee in her moving hand.

Eva stops stunned by the following composition: a THAI GIRL (20s) stands next to a portable massage table.

Ed stares at the Thai Girl’s backside. Stella CLAPS upon Eva’s arrival.

STELLA
Good morning!

EVA
What...?

STELLA
Look who we have here.
(to Thai Girl)
Sawadee kaa?

Thai Girl nods yes politely.

STELLA
That’s Mint. I found her in the paper.

EVA
I don’t need a massage. Thank you.

ED
She’s really good.
Ed grins at Eva in a creepy way. Veronica enters the room, passes by as if having a Thai masseuse in the living room is the most normal thing. However, the sparrow tattooed on Eva’s numb arm isn’t. Veronica stops at the sight.

VERONICA
You have a tattoo?

Stella puts her glasses on and moves closer for inspection.

VERONICA
What else is there in the bucket list - the Eiffel tower, a bungee jump?

Veronica smirks, then rushes out. Eva goes after her.

Ed crawls up on the massage table.

ED
We shouldn’t waste the money.

Stella slaps Ed away.

EXT. EVA’S HOUSE - DAY

Veronica gets on her bike, about to leave when Eva shows up, shouts after her.

EVA
I’m sorry.

Veronica stops, gets off the bike.

EVA
Maybe you’re right. I don’t know what will happen. Maybe I will survive for more than a year. And if my presence will make you happy, I’ll be present for you.

VERONICA
I’m running late.

Veronica puts her headphones on and rides off.

Eva stares at Veronica pedaling away from the house.
INT. DEREK’S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

Derek rummages through boxes, finds his old dusty GUITAR.

EXT. DEREK’S HOUSE - PATIO - LATER

Derek’s guitar has new strings now. Derek wipes it gently one last time, then STRUMS.

INT. AUSTIN MUSIC HALL - DAY

At the ticket counter. The VENDOR LADY hands Derek his change and FOUR TICKETS. Derek smiles at her.

INT. DEREK’S HOUSE - DAY

The four concert tickets are left on the table. Derek sits across from Barbara.

DEREK

BARBARA
But baby, we promised my parents to see them this weekend.

DEREK
We did?

Barbara walks to Derek, coils her arms around him.

BARBARA
Let me think about it.

Barbara’s tender voice contradicts her eyes - grim and determined.

INT. ELEPHANT THEATER - STAGE - DAY

Mary, Andrew, Lena and John rehearse. Mary feeds John a line.
MARY
“She doesn’t understand, Paul. She has a different set of values. She’s practical. She’s not young like us.”

But John forgets his line. He opens his mouth, GROANS frustrated, turns to Eva who sits in the auditorium.

JOHN
I lost it. Can we start over?

EVA
Take your time.

John turns around, looks down, MURMURS something. Mary gives Eva a judging look.

INT. ELEPHANT THEATER - REST ROOM - DAY

In one of the stalls - Eva flushes the toilet, starts dressing up slowly, frustrated that she only has one arm to do it. She hears FOOTSTEPS.

LENA (O.S.)
John seems so scatter-brained.

Eva holds still, listens.

Outside the stall - Mary and Lena have entered the rest room. Mary goes in a toilet stall. Lena fixes her hair in front of the mirror.

MARY (O.S.)
It’s all Eva’s fault. She tells us she’s going to kill herself and expects us to keep working like before.

LENA
I don’t know. I feel bad for her.

MARY (O.S.)
And I hate death and everything related to it.

LENA
Are you going to continue working with Elephant when they move to the new place?
MARY (O.S.)
If they move. And I don’t know.
Shit. Do you have tampons?

LENA
No. Want me to go buy you some?

MARY (O.S.)
It’s okay. I’ll go.

Mary exits the stall. She and Lena go out of the rest room.

ON EVA
Eva’s face has gone pale.

INT. ELEPHANT THEATER - DAY
Eva passes through the backstage. She sees Mary talking to John on stage. John catches her look and the two of them turn towards Eva. In Eva’s eyes they’re conspiring.

Intimidated, Eva speeds up her pace, passes by Robert.

ROBERT
Hey. Where--

Eva rushes towards the EMERGENCY EXIT. Storms out.

EXT. ELEPHANT THEATER
Eva’s cell RINGS, she answers.

BARBARA (V.O.)
Just because you’re sick doesn’t mean you can seduce Derek back!

Eva walks towards her Honda parked in the street.

EVA
What--
Eva stumbles but this time there’s nobody around to catch her. Eva falls. The phone flies out of her hands and falls on the ground as well.

Eva tries to stand up but she can’t.

INT. NEURO INSTITUTE - PATIENT ROOM - DAY

Eva, eyes closed, lies in bed. Stella sits on a chair nearby, writing her crosswords, Ed next to her. Veronica stares through the window watching a patient leaving the hospital.

Stella SIGHS, puts down the crosswords.

    STELLA
    I’ll go grab a coffee.

    VERONICA
    I’ll come with you.

    STELLA
    (to Ed)
    If Eva wakes up move closer so you can hear what she says, okay?

Stella goes out with Veronica. Ed sits in the chair next to the bed. Eva cautiously opens her eyes, making sure they’re alone. Ed smiles. He pets her hair.

    ED
    How are you, child?

Eva looks at a vase with flowers next to the bed. A petal falls off and slowly lands on the night stand.

Eva takes the petal with her moving arm, plays with it.

    EVA
    I’m afraid, Ed. It’s there. Waiting for me, no matter what I choose to do.
    (sighs)
    It’s funny how nobody cares they didn’t exist a hundred years ago. But we’re all freaked out we won’t exist a hundred years from now.

Ed leans over her, face super focused.
ED
Honey, can you say again?

EVA
It’s okay, Ed. Not important.

Ed takes Eva’s hand in hers. Ed smiles oblivious.

INT. NEURO INSTITUTE - OFFICE - DAY

A male NURSE (30) helps Eva sit in a wheel chair.

EVA
But I can still move my legs.

NURSE
That’s great, Miss Eckhart. But if you fall again you don’t know where you’ll hit your head. You can use crutches only when there’s someone with you.

Eva sighs as she sits in the chair, frowns like a child.

EXT. AUSTIN NURSING AND RETIREMENT CENTER - DAY

Trees and benches are spread between the different buildings. Eva and Ed walk through the Nursing Center campus.

Eva’s left arm holds a crutch, Ed supports her on the right side.

EVA
Thanks for coming, Ed.

Ed nods at Eva, he’s proud to be chosen for her companion.

INT. AUSTIN NURSING AND RETIREMENT CENTER - HALLWAY - DAY

Eva and Ed sit on a couch, Eva’s crutch in between. Nurse LIDIA, rosy cheeks and cheerful presence, approaches Ed.

LIDIA
(a little too loud)
Hello! I’m Lidia.
ED
    Well, hello, young lady.

Lidia shakes Ed’s hand, turns towards Eva.

EVA
    Actually, I’m the... patient. I spoke to you yesterday.

Eva gives Lidia her left moving hand.

LIDIA
    You’re Eva. That’s right. I’m so sorry.

Lidia shakes Eva’s left hand, then helps her stand up.

INT. AUSTIN NURSING AND RETIREMENT CENTER - DAY

Lidia leads Eva and Ed through the facility. Halloween pumpkins and skeletons hang from the walls. Both Eva and Ed look around with curiosity. Lidia enters a vast hall.

LIDIA
    Our recreation room.

Eva hesitantly follows Lidia inside. A FEW NURSES take care of elderly PATIENTS, some in wheelchairs, some in chairs. Ed sits at a table with two LADIES (70s) doing a puzzle. Lidia discreetly points at GREG (70) in a wheelchair.

LIDIA
    Greg is our ALS patient. We provide special hospice care for him.

Eva approaches Greg. She moves so Greg could see her.

EVA
    Hi Greg. I’m Eva.

Greg, fully paralyzed, slowly moves his eyes to Eva.

EVA
    I have ALS, too. That’s why I’m here. My future home, I guess.

It seems like Greg understands Eva, but he can’t nod or say a word in reply. So he just keeps staring at her.
Eva, awkward and nervous, glares back at Greg, trying to “speak” his language.

LIDIA
You’ll be happy to have Eva here, right Greg? But now we have to say goodbye. Bye-bye.

Eva waves bye at Greg and follows Lidia out.

LIDIA
I think he likes you.

Ed gets up and joins them as they exit the recreation room.

EXT. AUSTIN NURSING AND RETIREMENT CENTER - DAY

Eva slowly approaches Ed who sits on a bench outside. Eva sits down, shows Ed a leaflet of the facility.

EVA
It’s $250 a day. Can you imagine? That’s like 90,000 a year. I’d rather die than have to pay that much.

Eva realizes what she just said and LAUGHS. Ed chuckles along too, but it’s not clear if he knows why.

They remain silent for a second. Ed, who so far has always been silenced by Stella, sees an opportunity.

ED
Nobody can live your life for you. Not your daughter, not your mother, not me. You know what’s the right thing to do. Don’t think about it. ‘Cause the answer’s here.

Ed pokes the left side of his chest. Eva contemplates as she watches the paper skeletons sway in the tree nearby.

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - MORNING

At the ticket counter. Eva, crutch under arm and a small backpack on, gets her ticket and walks away.
She sits on a bench nearby. A young Mexican SINGLE MOM tries to hush her baby down next to her.

On the other end of the bench - an old TEXAN grins at Eva revealing a toothless smile. It’s going to be a colorful journey.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - MORNING

Sweaty and shady. Eva places herself in a window seat, wisely puts her backpack on the seat next to her. Unfortunately it doesn’t work. An OVERWEIGHT MAN (30s) shows up, fusses at Eva, waiting for her to remove the backpack. So she does.

Eva squeezes to the window, avoiding contact with the Obese Man, when she sees Derek outside. Eva taps on the window with her moving hand.

The bus slowly starts moving. Derek who keeps looking around sees the bus, sees Eva. He runs towards the bus.

The bus suddenly hits the brakes. Eva bumps her head in the seat in front of her.

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS - MORNING

Eva gets off the bus where Derek waits for her.

DEREK
You can’t go to Mexico alone. In a fucking Greyhound? Come on. Let’s go. I’ll come with you.

Eva, doesn’t move. The Greyhound DRIVER gets anxious, shouts from inside the bus.

DRIVER
Are you getting in or staying out?

EVA
(to Derek)
I told you, Veronica needs to stay at your place. She can’t learn where I’m going.

DRIVER
I’m taking off.
DEREK
(lowers voice)
It’s better if it is the three of us. For the... thing that you want to buy. Come on.

Eva looks at the driver, then at Derek.

EXT. GAS STATION NEAR AUSTIN - DAY

Derek fills up the tank of Stella and Ed’s RV. Eva slowly gets off the RV, walks towards him. She glances at the gas station’s food mart. Inside - Veronica explores the chips section.

ON EVA AND DEREK

EVA
What exactly did you tell her?

DEREK
That we should celebrate the Day of the Dead together.

Eva inspects Derek’s face closely.

EVA
Derek, what did you tell her?

DEREK
(sighs)
Maybe I mentioned the word reunion.

Eva is about to burst out when Veronica approaches with a bag of snacks. She hops in the RV.

EXT. NUEVO LAREDO, MEXICO - DAY

The RV drives out of the city, passes by a sign “Monterrey - 219 km.”

EXT. FIESTA INN - MONTERREY - DAY

Eva slowly gets out of the RV. She watches Veronica and Derek walk into the Fiesta Inn - a five story hotel in a quieter area of Monterrey. Eva looks around. She notices a livelier street a couple blocks away. Heads there with her crutch.
EXT. LIVELIER STREET - DAY

People holding beers, smoking cigarettes. Vendors of all sorts from food to clothes.

Eva spots a MEXICAN WOMAN (late 50s) with a small stand with flowers and make up for painting faces. The Mexican Woman catches Eva’s look and Eva quickly turns. But the Mexican Woman stops her.

EVA  
(in broken Spanish)  
[No, thank you.]

MEXICAN WOMAN  
Don’t be afraid. Today is not about fear. Today is about happiness.

Eva hesitates for a second. The Woman smiles encouragingly.

EXT. LIVELIER STREET - DAY

Same place. The Mexican Woman meticulously draws a skull on half of Eva’s face. She points the two sides of Eva’s face.

MEXICAN WOMAN  
Half is life, half is death. They cannot be separate.  
You know, they’re in love.

Eva looks at the Woman hypnotized, sees a wisdom bigger than life coming from her eyes.

The Mexican Woman finishes the make up. She takes a mirror, puts it in front of Eva.

EVA  
Wow, it’s amazing.

Eva stares at the beautiful and intricate skull on her face.

EXT. LIVELIER STREET - DAY

Eva walks back. She passes through the crowd but now looks at it with fascination. She breathes in the freedom and chaos.
EXT. FIESTA INN MONTERREY - DAY

Veronica and Derek are in front of the RV when they see Eva approaching. Veronica notices Eva’s face.

    VERONICA
        Oh God...

Eva reaches Veronica and Derek, beaming with joy.

    DEREK
        We booked two rooms.

    EVA
        Great. Let’s celebrate.

Nobody shares Eva’s enthusiasm but at this moment that doesn’t seem to bother her.

EXT. MONTERREY CEMETERY - NIGHT

The cemetery is lit up by the candles of hundreds of altars. Flowers, paper skeletons, trinkets - the graves don’t look spooky but magical.

Eva, Derek and Veronica have stopped next to an altar. A Mexican MAN (40s) offers the three of them tequila shots.

        MAN
            (in Spanish)
            [Please, for my parents.]

Eva and Derek look at Veronica.

        EVA
            I don’t think it’s a--

        VERONICA
            Don’t be disrespectful.

Eva, thinks for a moment, then nods. The Man hands them the tequila shots.

Veronica’s eyes light up - finally some fun and for her. Derek, Eva and Veronica tap glasses and drink.
EXT. MONTERREY CEMETERY - LATER

MARIACHI MUSIC echoes around the cemetery. Eva, Derek and Veronica watch a group of DANCING PEOPLE.

Eva nods head to the rhythm of the music. Derek takes notice.

DEREK
Shall we?

Eva stares at Derek’s hand reaching for hers.

EVA
You hate dancing.

Derek takes Eva’s crutch and hands it to Veronica. He embraces Eva. They move clumsily, Derek with his lack of talent, Eva with her challenging body.

EVA
It’s pathetic.

Derek ignores Eva, lifts her in the air.

EVA
Stop. Derek. Stop.

But it looks like Eva likes it, giggling in Derek’s arms. The people around them CHEER and APPLAUD their awkward dance.

The song ends. Derek puts Eva back on the ground. They both laugh, out of breath. Eva puts her head on his chest. Derek embraces her gently and they close their eyes.

Veronica leans over Eva’s crutch as she watches her parents.

EXT. DOWNTOWN MONTERREY - DAY

A pack of STRAY DOGS cruises the small street. A short-legged BROWN MUTT falls behind the group, sniffs in the air. Food!

EVA (O.S.)
Here, doggie-doggie.
Brownie walks into an alley where Eva and Derek wait for him. Eva throws a treat and Brownie wolfs it down. Seduced by the treats, Brownie slowly reaches Eva and Derek. Eva pets Brownie while Derek puts a collar on his neck.

EXT. ANIMAL CLINIC MONTERREY - DAY

Derek and Eva hide behind the corner, a few feet away from the clinic. Derek looks through printed photos of him and Eva hugging Brownie at different locations. He chooses a couple photos, hands the rest to Eva.

DEREK
You stay here.

EVA
No. This whole thing is my responsibility.

DEREK
Please don’t start again with “I don’t need any help.”

EVA
I don’t want you to get in trouble. And I don’t need help.

Eva feigns a smile at Derek, takes the photos.

INT. ANIMAL CLINIC MONTERREY - DAY

The RING of a bell acknowledges Eva’s entrance. She approaches the counter. A VETERINARY DOCTOR (50) shows up.

VETERINARY DOCTOR
(in Spanish)
[Hello, how can I help you?]

Eva puts the photos on the counter.

EVA
[I need pentobarbital. For my dog.]

The Doctor puts his thick glasses on, examines the photos.

EVA
[Brownie has tumor.]
VETERINARY DOCTOR

[Uh-huh. What kind?]  

EVA

[Uhm... Brain. He had a tumor. Doesn’t have it anymore. But he’s dying. And he’s in pain. And he needs help. Please.]

The Doctor looks up at Eva, studies her, notices the crutch.

VETERINARY DOCTOR

[Where is the dog?]  

EVA

[Home. In Texas.]

The Doctor gives the photos back to Eva.

VETERINARY DOCTOR

[I can’t help you.]

EVA

You’re cruel. You can’t do this to him. He’s in pain.

The Doctor is not impressed. Eva turns to the door when she sees something outside. It’s Brownie!

Eva opens the door, shouts to call Brownie’s attention. Brownie stops, spots Eva, waves with his tail and runs towards the clinic.

EVA

(to Doctor)
He’s here, not in Texas. Broken Spanish, sorry.
(to Brownie)
I’ll be there in a second, my dearest dog.

Eva closes the door. The Doctor stares at her.

EVA

Please.

The Doctor sighs.
EXT. ANIMAL CLINIC MONTERREY - DAY

Eva turns around the corner where Derek awaits her.

DEREK
What happened?

Eva shows Derek a small bottle of liquid pentobarbital. Just then Derek spots Brownie, swaying his tail around, expecting a reward for saving the day.

Derek and Eva hurry to leave the “crime scene”.

EXT. MONTERREY - STREET - DAY

Eva and Derek walk back to the parked RV. Eva eats a burrito, tears chunks and throws them to Brownie who walks along with them.

Eva and Derek stops at the RV. Brownie takes advantage that Eva is distracted for a moment, springs up and steals the whole burrito.

EVA
Hey.

Brownie runs away. He turns his head and looks at Eva. It almost looks as if he grins at her. Eva smiles as she watches her savior disappearing in the streets, pursuing his dog thug life.

DEREK
Now you can relax, finally...

Derek doesn’t know how to finish the sentence, nor does Eva.

EXT. FIESTA INN MONTERREY - STREET - DAY

Derek loads their bags in the RV. Eva leans on the RV, watches Veronica exiting the hotel and approaching them.

EXT. MCALLEN-REYNOSA BORDER - DAY

The RV has just passed the Mexican border and heads to American customs. It stops next to the customs agent cabin.
INT./EXT. RV - DAY

The CUSTOMS OFFICER hands their passports back to Derek.

CUSTOMS OFFICER
Sir, I would like to take a look inside your vehicle.
I’ll need you to step outside.

DEREK
Sure.

Derek and Eva get off the RV, followed by Veronica.

Derek has lost his confident face, turns to Eva, worried.

EVA
Fuck.

DEREK
Let me do the talking.

Veronica looks at her parents perplexed, they’re acting weird.

VERONICA
Guys, what’s the problem? We didn’t do anything wrong.

Eva and Derek exchange looks. Eva is pale and nervous as hell. Feels like it takes forever for the Customs Officer to check on the RV.

Finally, the Customs Officer steps outside with a serious face on.

CUSTOMS OFFICER
(to Derek and Eva)
Who is the owner of that vehicle?

EVA
My mother.

CUSTOMS OFFICER
What year is it?

EVA
I don’t know. ‘75?
CUSTOMS OFFICER
This RV is too dangerous to drive, ma’am. Your mother can get a serious fine.

Eva’s face almost beams.

EVA
Yes. You’re right. We won’t drive it anymore.

CUSTOMS OFFICER
Please, be careful. And tell your mother she needs to give it for scrap. Take care, folks.

The Customs Officer walks away. Eva waits for him to be far enough than turns to Derek and hugs him excited.

Veronica is even more baffled.

DEREK
Let’s get out of here.

Derek helps Eva get in the RV, then hops inside also.

INT. RV

Eva lifts the mattress and looks under it. She sighs relieved, unaware that Veronica sees her as she enters the RV. Eva moves to the front and Derek drives the RV.

Keeping her balance, Veronica stands up, goes to the bed and lifts the mattress.

EXT. ROUTE 281 - CONTINUOUS

Not so far from the customs. Derek pulls over. Veronica flees out, furious. She holds the pentobarbital bottle.

Eva cautiously gets off the RV, followed by Derek.

VERONICA
How could you?

EVA
Honey, please--
VERONICA
This thing here is obviously illegal.

Veronica points at Derek, blowing the lid off.

VERONICA
Getting back together? For this? You’re disgusting.
Both of you.

DEREK
This trip was my idea.

VERONICA
Oh yeah? Except that she’s the one who decided to kill herself.

Veronica waves arms furiously. Alert, Eva follows the pentobarbital with her eyes. Veronica spots Eva’s concern.

VERONICA
Here, you can have it. Swallow the whole fucking bottle.

Veronica spontaneously throws the bottle at Eva, but with her moving arm holding the crutch, Eva doesn’t manage to catch it. The plastic bottle hits Eva and rolls down the road. Derek dashes after it, grabs it before it falls into the ditch.

Veronica loses her combative attitude. Looks away, awkward.

EVA
I did not choose to have a terminal disease. I did not choose any of this.

Eva gets back in the RV. Veronica stares after her for a few moments, then gets in, too. Derek sighs.

INT. RV - DRIVING - LATER

Heavy silence reigns as Derek drives the frowning girls home.

DEREK
The huevos rancheros were really good.
No reaction whatsoever. Derek turns the RADIO on.

   EVA
   Take the one eighty six.

   DEREK
   Why?

   EVA
   Just take it.

Derek turns onto the 186 freeway.

EXT. LAGUNA MADRE BEACH - DAY

Derek helps Eva get off the RV. She looks at the ocean, blue, endless, inviting. Eva heads to the beach.

Veronica gets off and stays outside the RV watching her parents walk to the water.

At the beach - Derek helps Eva get her shoes off. Eva lets her bare feet be caressed by the small waves.

Eva throws her crutch on the sand. She slowly makes a step forward. Derek supports her with one arm.

   EVA
   I’ve always wanted to learn to swim.

Eva moves further in, Derek besides her, water now up to their waist. A small wave pushes Eva. She sways about.

   EVA
   Teach me.

   DEREK
   Eva...

   EVA
   What do I do? Show me.

Eva carefully immerses in the water, Derek keeps his arms around her. She tries to wave with her moving arm, kicks with her left leg, like a helpless drowning animal.
Eva is out of breath, struggling in the water. Derek gently lifts her up.

DEREK

Eva slowly lies on her back, her muscles relax.

DEREK
Easy.

Derek supports Eva as her body dances along with the waves. Eva closes eyes, floating in the rhythm of the ocean.

INT. DEREK’S CHEVY - PARKED - NIGHT

In front of Eva’s house. Derek, in the driver seat of his truck, watches Ed and Stella in their pyjamas get back in the RV.

Veronica enters the house. Followed by Eva, who stops and looks at Derek. She waves at him and Derek waves back.

Eva enters the house. Derek, full of emotions, closes eyes for a moment, then opens them and starts the car.

INT. DEREK’S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Derek sneaks in bed where Barbara is already sleeping. She turns drowsily.

BARBARA
How was the conference?

DEREK
Good.

BARBARA
Good.

Barbara dozes off again. Derek turns, stares at the ceiling.
INT. ELEPHANT THEATER - STAGE - DAY

There’s nobody on stage but Eva who walks with a lot of effort, slowly, almost staggering. Robert shows up in front of her.

    EVA
    I want you to finish the show.

    ROBERT
    Me? I can’t.

    EVA
    The blocking is in place, the lighting is set. You just need to be here.

Eva slowly heads out. She stops and turns.

    EVA
    When you send the press release, include that it’s my final play. Make it sound dramatic, my disease and all. Use me.

    ROBERT
    That is...

    EVA
    That is money.

Eva smiles lovingly at Robert and exits.

EXT. PRINCIPAL MEYERS’ HOUSE - MORNING

Veronica walks towards a one story house. She hesitantly KNOCKS on the door.

Principal Meyers opens. A grey CAT peeks at Veronica from behind the Principal. The Principal gently lifts the Cat.

    PRINCIPAL MEYERS
    You mind waiting a couple more minutes? Mister Belvedere just can’t get enough.

Principal Meyers taps the Cat’s belly playfully.
VERONICA
Sure.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Come on in. I’ll be right back.

Veronica hesitantly enters into the--

HALLWAY

The Principal takes the cat’s bowl and disappears in the kitchen. Veronica, bends down, pets the Cat for a few moments.

She gets up and looks at a photograph hanging on the wall - a younger Principal and a charming man in his 40s smiling.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS (O.S.)
My husband passed ten years ago.

Veronica turns. Principal puts the cat’s bowl on the floor.

VERONICA
I’m sorry.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
He was a good man. Brave heart. Fought till the very end.
(tosses head)
Anyway. I’m ready.

Principal Meyers walks out. Veronica casts one last glance at Meyers’ house - tidy, quiet, frozen still.

INT./EXT. PRINCIPAL MEYERS’ FORD - DAY

“How was the family trip?” through the neighborhood, Veronica in the passenger seat.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
How was the family trip?

Principal glances at Veronica - the question has brought a shadow of concern on her face.
PRINCIPAL MEYERS
We don’t have to talk about it.

The Principal arrives in front of a CATHOLIC CHURCH. She parks. Veronica glances at the Church, then looks at the Principal who turns off the engine and exits the car.

VERONICA
It wasn’t a family trip. My parents took me with them so it would look presentable for the customs agents on the way back. They bought some drug used for euthanizing animals.

Principal Meyers has frozen on her way to lock her car.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
What’s the name of this drug?

VERONICA
Pento-something.

A COUPLE (30s) heading to the church spot Principal Meyers and greet her. The Principal waves back, locks the car.

The Principal and Veronica walk towards the church.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Suicide is a sin. And you should not be an accomplice.

They stop right at the gates of the church. Veronica nods and they enter the church.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

The service has ended. Some people leave, others chat and mingle. The Principal talks to MR RAMSEY and MRS RAMSEY (40s) and MRS TAYLOR, an African-American woman in her 50s, all three parents of students in Austin High School.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Excuse me for a second.

The Principal moves from the parents to Veronica who stands nearby.

VERONICA
I’ll be going, Miss Meyers.
PRINCIPAL MEYERS

We will not let your mother go like that. We will fight to keep her with us, okay?

Veronica nods vaguely, heads to the exit. The Principal goes back to Mr and Mrs Ramsey and Mrs Taylor. Mrs Ramsey stares after Veronica, concerned.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS

Veronica is a great girl. Doesn’t deserve the behavior of her mother.

MRS TAYLOR

If that’s illegal, we should do something about it.

Principal Meyers, thoughtful, stares at the altar.

INT. AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Eva walks in the classroom, looking down at her watch.

EVA

Sorry I’m late--

Eva lifts her head and stops. The room is empty. Only Principal Meyers sits at a desk.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS

I hate to be the messenger here. There’s been a few complaints from the parents of several of your students.

EVA

Complaints about what?

PRINCIPAL MEYERS

You’re a bad influence on the students. Say the parents.

EVA

You can’t fire me because of my personal life.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS

Miss Eckhart, our school has certain ideals. We teach our students courage and hope. If you don’t comply with our mission you don’t have a place among us.
The Principal heads to the door but Eva blocks her way.

EVA
Stay away from my daughter.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Veronica is an adult and she makes her own choices. Which are, by the way, far more mature than yours.

EVA
What do you even know about my choices?

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
I know that suffering is courage.

Principal Meyers goes round Eva.

EVA
I can sue you and your school.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Good luck with that. You’re still in Texas where assisted suicide is illegal. I have the support of the whole community. You have nothing. I’ll see you with the superintendant.

The Principal exits. Off of Eva’s bellicose determinedness.

INT. EVA’S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Eva comes down from upstairs. In the living room - Veronica sits at the table in front of her laptop. The moment she sees Eva, Veronica looks in her coffee cup and goes to the kitchen. Eva passes by the table and something catches her attention.

Eva sneaks a peek - it’s the list of universities from the Principal, starting with George Washington in D.C. The list is printed on the letterhead of the high school.

INT. AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - NIGHT

A few teachers and mainly moms gather for a PTA meeting. Eva confidently walks in with her crutch.
Eva nods to a couple teachers, then heads to the coffee & snacks table where Mr and Mrs Ramsey pour coffee for themselves. Oblivious, they smile at her.

**EVA**
Hi. I’m Eva, Veronica’s mother.

The faces of Mr and Mrs Ramsey quickly turn serious. Mrs Ramsey scans the room, searching for Principal Meyers.

The Principal spots Eva and rushes to the coffee table.

**PRINCIPAL MEYERS**
(whispers to Eva)
You can’t be here.

**EVA**
You can’t suspend me from being a mother, can you?

Eva calmly takes a plastic cup, pours coffee in it.

**PRINCIPAL MEYERS**
You need to leave immediately.

**EVA**
That’s ridiculous. I’m not leaving.

**MRS RAMSEY**
Ma’am, why don’t you just go and not make any scenes?

**MR RAMSEY**
Respect the school’s decision.

**PRINCIPAL MEYERS**
I’m calling security.

Principal Meyers exits the room.

Mrs Taylor also from the Church approaches the table.

**MRS TAYLOR**
You ain’t a good example for our kids.

Mrs Ramsey elbows Mrs Taylor, like “hush”.
MRS TAYLOR
(to Mrs Ramsey)
What?
(to Eva)
We don’t want no suicides in our community.

MR RAMSEY
Yeah. Whatever you do, go do it somewhere far away from our children. We teach them to be fighters, not cowards.

The parents surround Eva like carnivores.

Eva turns, makes her way through the hostile parents and gathers the attention of the whole room.

EVA
Eva Eckhart, mother of senior Veronica McCauley. I have ALS and I don’t want to die in pain. I want to have a peaceful death with dignity and I want to have it here, in Texas where my family is. Bad influence on your children? I don’t think so. I’m showing everybody that my life is mine and only mine. And it is my free will to decide how to live it and how to end it.

BOOOO! All parents protest in a mash of SHOUTS. The Principal re-enters the room, this time with a SECURITY GUARD.

SECURITY GUARD
Ma’am, I’ll have to ask you to come with me.

EVA
(to Principal)
Getting me fired from your school will not stop me.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
We’ll see about that.

The Guard approaches Eva but she voluntarily exits the room, chin up.
EXT. ELEPHANT THEATER - NIGHT

A crowd gathers for the premiere of “Barefoot in the park”. Barbara and Derek approach the building.

INT. ELEPHANT THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

John, Andrew, Lena and Mary bow. The audience APPLAUDS.

GIVE JOHN SPEECH

Backstage - Eva in a wheelchair, Robert behind her. Eva smiles at the sight of the actors bowing on stage. Melancholy takes over her.

INT. ELEPHANT THEATER - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The cocktail wrap party for guests and crew approaches its end. Stella and Ed walk to Eva, Veronica behind them.

STELLA
We’ll be going, honey. It was great.

Stella kisses Eva and leaves with Veronica and Ed. Barbara who’s been standing alone nearby, sees there’s nobody near Eva and walks to her.

BARBARA
It was very funny.

EVA
Thanks for coming, Barb.

BARBARA
So when do you plan on leaving us?

Eva is stunned by the question.

EVA
I don’t know... Yet.

BARBARA
I’m just asking because Derek and I are planning on having our own family soon.
EVA
You have no reason to worry. We’re past the lovers stage.

In the far end of the hallway, Derek exits the rest room and walks to them. He nods hesitantly at Eva then leaves with Barbara. On their way out, Derek turns back and smiles at Eva. She smiles at him as well.

EXT. EVA’S HOUSE - STREET - DAY

Derek parks his truck on the street. He walks to the door, KNOCKS. Veronica opens.

VERONICA
Hey. What’s up?

DEREK
Is your mother home?

VERONICA
No.

DEREK
Where is she?

VERONICA
I don’t know.

Derek goes to the RV, knocks. Stella shows up.

STELLA
You really like hanging out here.

DEREK
Hey. Have you seen Eva?

Stella shakes head no. Derek takes out his phone, dials Eva.

EXT. ELEPHANT THEATER - DAY

Eva in the wheelchair, a huge scarf keeping her warm, Robert standing next to her. The two of them watch from across the street as the Elephant Theater building is being taken apart by construction workers.
The LOUD SOUND of the building being destroyed prevents Eva from hearing her phone RINGING.

EXT. EVA’S HOUSE - STREET - DUSK

Derek has fallen asleep on the porch. Wakes up to the SOUND of Robert’s car parking in the street. Robert helps Eva get out. Derek runs to them.

DEREK
(to Robert)
I got her.

Robert kisses Eva on the cheek and gets back in his car, takes off. Derek is panicked and angry.

DEREK
Where the hell were you?

EVA
We were just out.

DEREK
And picking up the phone wasn’t part of the deal? I was worried.

Derek, disturbed and scared, takes Eva’s hand.

DEREK
Never disappear like that without telling me. Please.

EVA
Okay.

Derek rolls Eva’s wheelchair towards the house.

EXT. EVA’S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Derek lifts Eva, who’s now in her pj-s and places her on the bed. He gently covers her with the blanket, then sits in a chair next to the bed.

EVA
Isn’t it time for you to go home?
DEREK
I guess.

Eva smiles. She hesitates for a moment.

EVA
You know that... I mean. You know, right?

DEREK
I know.

Derek takes Eva’s hand and she falls asleep holding the man who drove her crazy so many times and yet remains her one and only true love.

EXT. EVA’S HOUSE - DAY

Eva, sits in her wheelchair on the front porch. She is covered by a blanket, enjoying the sunny winter day.

Veronica runs out the house, passes by her mother.

EVA
Where are you going?

VERONICA
Out.

EVA
With Ally?

VERONICA
Friends. You don’t know them.

Veronica gets on her bike and rides off. Eva watches her estranged daughter disappear down the road.

INT. DEREK’S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Derek is playing his guitar quietly. Barbara shows up in the living room, disturbed.
BARBARA
Can you please turn it down a little bit? I’m trying to work.

DEREK
I can hardly hear it.

BARBARA
You can pretend to be a rock star in the patio.

Derek shrugs shoulders. Barbara spots Derek’s beer on the table next to him. Rushes and puts the beer on a coaster.

BARBARA
Seriously? A hundred times.

DEREK
Hey what’s wrong?

Barbara sighs, strokes her hair.

BARBARA
Why do you spend so much time with Eva? You’ve always told me how much she annoyed you.

Derek doesn’t know how to answer.

BARBARA
I’m here. I’m alive and I need you. That woman is going to die.

DEREK
Shut up.

Barbara is surprised by the sudden raise in Derek’s voice.

BARBARA
I think it’s time you decide what you’re doing with your life.

Barbara strides out. Derek’s phone RINGS. It’s Eva.
EXT. EVA'S HOUSE - DAY

Eva holds her phone with her moving hand.

DEREK (V.O.)
Hey. What’s up?

EVA
Nothing. I... I’m just so used to running around. It’s driving me crazy, pinned to this chair. I guess I can’t put off facing myself anymore...

DEREK (V.O.)
I can come keep you company. I would love to get away from here.

EVA
You fighting?

DEREK (V.O.)
Yeah. Anyway. I can come right away.

EVA
No, it’s okay. I think you should work out your thing with Barb. I’ll talk to you later.

Eva hangs up. She takes the pentobarbital from under the blanket, looks at it.

INT. AUSTIN FOOD BANK - DAY

Hundreds of impoverished people line up with baskets in hand. Among the volunteers handing them food are Principal Meyers and Veronica. The Principal hands a can of soup to a MAN.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
(to Man)
God bless you!

Veronica hands the same Man a can of vegetables.

VERONICA
God bless you.

Veronica smiles at the Man as he keeps walking down the line.
INT. AUSTIN FOOD BANK - BACK ROOM - DAY

Dozens VOLUNTEERS wrap up the day.

Veronica and Principal Meyers take off their aprons.

VERONICA
I like helping people.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Good.

VERONICA
I really think I could take care of my mother.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
She still hasn’t changed her mind, has she?

Veronica shakes head no, bitter.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Why don’t you just throw the drug away?

VERONICA
I can’t. She always keeps it with her.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
(thoughtful)
We’ll figure something out.

The Principal stares at a group of volunteers, particularly at PHIL, a muscular African-American in his 30s.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
I’ll see you in school. Take care.

The Principal goes over to Phil.

EXT. EVA’S HOUSE - DAY

Veronica rides her bike in the street. As she approaches the house, she sees Eva on the front porch, eyes closed, lifeless. Veronica can see the bottle of pentobarbital in Eva’s lap. Veronica jumps off the bike, runs towards the house.
VERONICA
Mom!

She reaches the porch when Eva opens her eyes. Veronica stops herself.

EVA
(drowsily)
Hey, sweetie...

Eva takes the unopened bottle of pentobarbital from her lap, hides it under the blanket.

VERONICA
Why are you sleeping outside?

Veronica, upset, rolls Eva’s wheelchair inside the house.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

CU on Eva’s face, uncomfortable, embarrassed.

EVA
(reluctant)
I’m ready.

Stella enters the bathroom.

INT. EVA’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stella and Ed lift Eva up and put her in bed. Stella covers Eva with a blanket. Eva breathes with difficulty.

EVA
Thank you, guys.

Ed leaves the room. Stella sits on the edge of the bed.

EVA
Mom, I think the time has come.
STELLA
(sighs)
Sweet little girl. I really hoped I could change your mind.

EVA
When have you ever managed to change my mind?

Stella smiles, takes Eva’s hand and kisses it.

EXT. EVA’S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Eva enjoys the sun with her eyes closed, sitting in her wheelchair. Stella goes out of the RV, walks towards Eva.

STELLA
Are you busy right now?

Eva opens her eyes, shoots Stella with a skeptical look.

EVA
Multi-tasking.

STELLA
Well, I never know. I want to show you something.

Beat.

STELLA
So you’re not busy.

Eva sighs, shakes head no.

INT. CASKETS SHOWROOM - DAY

Stella leads, Ed rolls Eva’s wheelchair through rows of different caskets. Eva finds it hard to believe where they’re at. Stella stops in front of a casket, touches the inside.

STELLA
Cushy.

EVA
Mom--
STELLA
Ed come here. Let’s see how it looks.

Ed reluctantly approaches. Tries to get in the casket when a CUSTOMER SERVICE MAN spots the group and rushes in nervous.

CUSTOMER SERVICE MAN
Can I help you folks? Just let me know which item interests you.

EVA
I’m sorry. We’re not interested in any items. Thank you.

Customer Service Man leaves the gang, suspicion on his face.

EVA
Let’s go home.

STELLA
But--

EVA
I don’t want to be buried. You know it.

STELLA
You and your father, with your ashes in the ocean.

Stella is truly disappointed. Eva mellows.

EVA
But you can throw me a party.

EXT. EVA’S HOUSE - PATIO - DAY
Stella in a black dress, arranges drinks and snacks on a table. Ed rolls Eva’s wheelchair next to Stella.

EVA
We talked about the black color.

STELLA
It’s a funeral.
EVA
It’s a funeral party.

Stella sighs, strides out to change.

The door bell RINGS. Ed leaves Eva and goes to open the door.

INT. EVA’S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ed lets Robert, Lena and Matt come in.

EXT. EVA’S HOUSE - PATIO - CONTINUOUS

Robert, Lena and Matt slowly walk towards Eva. They look around uncomfortable - how are they supposed to act?

EVA
Hey, guys.

Robert, Lena and Matt give Eva a hug. It’s a little awkward.

LENA
Are we wishing you a happy death day?

EVA
If you want. Come on, grab a drink. It’s not so scary.

Robert, Lena and Matt approach the drinks & snacks table.

Derek shows up in the patio, walks to Eva.

DEREK
Having fun?

EVA
Like there’s no tomorrow. What happened with Barb?

Derek shakes his head “no”.
DEREK
Obviously steady relationships are not my thing. 
Plus I don’t know if all women are like that, or I’m 
always attracting crazy ones.

EVA
Don’t make me call Barb and form an alliance of the 
ex-es.

DEREK
Getting along with Veronica will do just fine. That’s 
as far as I want to go with stable relationships. 
Where is she?

Eva’s face turns morose. She points with her eyes towards the house.

INT. VERONICA’S ROOM - DAY

Derek knocks on the door and enters. Veronica, at her desk, takes off her head phones.

DEREK
You need to come downstairs.

VERONICA
Forget it.

Derek sizes up his teenage daughter. Time for discipline.

DEREK
(firm)
Get your ass downstairs now.

Derek exits the room. Veronica takes her phone out, checks it anticipating, then gets up and 
heads out.

EXT. EVA’S HOUSE - PATIO - LATER

MELLOW COUNTRY MUSIC plays. The awkwardness has disappeared. Derek cooks 
the barbecue. Stella and Robert dance, Eva watches them smiling. Eva looks happy 
surrounded by the people she loves. Veronica is there too, a little off and away from the rest 
of the people.
EXT. EVA’S HOUSE - PATIO - LATER

Everybody sits on chairs around the patio except for Derek who still cooks the barbecue.

    ROBERT
    Okay. I nominate...
    (looks around)
    Derek.

Derek is caught off guard. He shrugs shoulders uncomfortable.

    DEREK
    Uhm, I guess my favorite moment with Eva is the
    birth of our daughter.

A collective AW! Everybody looks at Veronica but she looks away, awkward.

    DEREK
    Eva was, and is, the strongest woman I know.
    (to Eva)
    I guess Veronica’s delivery is how I will remember
    you. Powerful and vulnerable at the same time. And
    pulling my hair and screaming “I hate you”.

Eva LAUGHS and so does everybody else.

EXT. EVA’S HOUSE - SIMULTANEOUS

A police car parks in the street. Two officers GARRET (40) and Phil from the Homeless
Shelter get out, approach the door. Phil looks over his shoulder. Thirty feet away on the
street is parked Principal Meyer’s Ford.

Phil nods at the Principal, who sits in the car.

INT. EVA’S HOUSE - PATIO - SAME

The doorbell RINGS. Eva looks around - seems like everybody’s present. Weird.

    ROBERT
    I’ll get it.

Robert enters the house.
EVA
I didn’t plan a speech but maybe now is a good time to thank you all. For being next to me, for supporting me.

Veronica looks away.

EVA
I feel so... Calm. Once you know you can leave this world in peace, death is no longer so scary. I really believe that--

Robert shows up from inside the house, very concerned.

ROBERT
(to Eva)
I think you should come.

Derek helps roll Eva’s chair. Everybody moves inside. Veronica totters after the crowd.

EXT. EVA’S HOUSE - STREET - DAY
The door opens. Eva, in her wheelchair, with Derek, Stella, Ed and everybody else behind her, surprised to see the two officers.

PHIL
Good afternoon, Miss Eckhart. My name is Phil Donovan. My partner officer Garret Lewis.

EVA
Yes?

PHIL
We would like to check on your well-being, ma’am. We received a complaint that you own a schedule two controlled substance, federally prohibited for use without prescription.

PHIL
Pentobarbital, to be more specific. Often used by people with suicidal tendencies or addictions.

Eva is completely shocked - how, who, when? But more terrified is Veronica, observing the situation from behind her mother.
EVA
I have no idea what you’re talking about.

PHIL
An anonymous caller offered information that you possess pentobarbital and you plan to use it to commit suicide. We just want to make sure you’re okay.

Everybody looks around perplexed but Eva doesn’t question herself. There’s only one member of her family who could have shared this information with an “anonymous caller”. Behind Eva, Veronica holds her breath, scared.

Eva closes eyes for a second, as she process the betrayal of her daughter, but there is not time for tears. She looks up at Officer Phil.

EVA
You can tell Dorothy Meyers to fuck off. I don’t have anything.

GARRET
It was reported to us that you keep the substance on your person. You wouldn’t mind us checking, would you?

EVA
Of course I would. You can’t--

PHIL
Miss Eckhart, if you don’t turn over the pentobarbital, we’ll have to search your house.

Unaware that Phil is manipulating them, Stella steps forward.

STELLA
The drug is mine. I bought it.

Ed standing beside Stella, steps forward also. Seems like he didn’t hear what she just said.

ED
I bought the drug.
PHIL
Helping a person commit suicide is a felony. I’m sure you wouldn’t jeopardize your family, Miss Eckhart.

Eva slowly takes out the pentobarbital bottle from under the wheelchair. Phil puts a glove on, takes it, inspects it.

EVA
I went to Mexico and bought this alone. Nobody helped me. Not my ex-husband, not my daughter, not my parents.

GARRET
Ma’am, please show us the prescription for this drug.

Eva remains silent. Phil and Garret exchange looks. Phil puts the pentobarbital into a bag, zips it up. Everybody behind Eva holds their breath.

PHIL
Ma’am you will have to come with us.

Phil steps forward towards Eva when Derek blocks the Officer’s way.

DEREK
Don’t touch her.

For less than a second Phil twists Derek’s arm around and puts him to the ground. He takes out a pair of handcuffs and quickly cuffs Derek’s wrists.

GARRET
(into his transceiver)
837 requesting back up. 837 requesting back up.

Phil keeps Derek to the ground.

GARRET
Everybody step aside. Now!

The people around Eva back up. Garret goes behind Eva’s wheelchair and rolls it out of the house. Stella totters after him.

STELLA
Leave my child alone!
GARRET
Ma’am step aside immediately.

EVA
Mom, go inside please.

But Stella doesn’t. Ed rushes next to her as well.

EXT. EVA’S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Three police cars arrive. The flashing lights have attracted an audience of a few NEIGHBORS.

Garret as well as a few other OFFICERS take away the handcuffed Derek, Stella and Ed, and push them into a police van.

Phil rolls Eva’s chair up a ramp and into the van as well.

Veronica watches the whole scene from the porch of the house. Robert, Lena and Matt, speechless next to her.

The police cars and the van depart.

ROBERT
I can’t believe it.

Robert looks at Veronica and she looks away ashamed. That’s when she sees Principal Meyers’ Ford drive away from across the street and disappear around the corner.

INT. AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Principal Meyers goes over paperwork on her desk. There’s a KNOCK on the door.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Come in.

Veronica enters. Principal Meyers smiles widely.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Hello, Veronica.

Veronica remains standing, a serious face on.
VERONICA
You called the cops on my mother?

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Your mother was about to commit a major crime and involve you and your family in it.

VERONICA
But you can’t cuff her for that.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Eva needed help and she’ll get it in the proper facility. I’m more than certain that very soon she will change her mind and realize that life is a precious gift from God. Just like you are. Veronica, your mom will stay with you, like you wanted. We saved her.

But Veronica doesn’t look satisfied by their “achievement”. She looks as if she just woke up. She sees the Principal in a different light now.

VERONICA
You don’t have the right to separate my family like that.

Veronica turns and exits the office.

EXT. AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Veronica gets on her bike, furious. She pedals off when suddenly Ally shows up in front of her. Veronica hits the brakes abruptly.

VERONICA
I’m sorry. I didn’t see you.

ALLY
It’s okay. Are you going home?

Veronica nods yes.

ALLY
I’ll walk with you for a bit.

Veronica gets off the bike, they start walking. Veronica gazes at her feet, absent-minded.
ALLY
Are you okay?

VERONICA
I don’t know. How about you?

Veronica looks at Ally’s flat belly.

VERONICA
Did you...

ALLY
Yep. Got an abortion eight months ago.

Ally looks away uncomfortable.

ALLY
Anyway. I just wanted to tell you that I’m sorry about your mom.

Veronica looks at Ally surprised and ashamed.

ALLY
I can’t believe they fired her from school. Please tell her that I really think she’s awesome.

Ally and Veronica stop at an intersection.

VERONICA
Okay.

ALLY
I’m going in the opposite direction.

VERONICA
Sure. Yeah.

ALLY
See you around.

Ally walks off. Veronica stands at the intersection for a moment. She crosses the street.
EXT. AUSTIN AREA MENTAL HEALTH - DAY

Stella, Ed, Derek and Veronica silently walk towards the facility. Ed holds a large bouquet of flowers. Stella has a bag of food. They all enter the building.

INT. AUSTIN AREA MENTAL HEALTH - HALLWAY - DAY

Stella, Ed, Derek and Veronica stride through the hallway, heading to the patient lounge.

A LOUD FEMALE SCREAM. Veronica turns around scared - it’s not clear where the scream came from.

INT. AUSTIN AREA MENTAL HEALTH - PATIENT LOUNGE - DAY

Patients sit around tables. Nurses assist them in different activities. Next to the window is Eva in her wheelchair. Eva spots her family entering the lounge, vaguely smiles at them.

Stella, Derek and Ed approach Eva. Veronica totters behind them, unwilling to confront her mother.

ON VERONICA

She looks around the room. Some patients look normal, others have visible physical deformations. A WOMAN shrieks and her scream turns into hysterical laughter. Veronica is scared but more than anything shocked - what is her mother doing here...

ON STELLA, ED, DEREK AND EVA

Derek smiles at Eva. Ed puts the flowers in her lap, kisses her on the cheek. Stella puts the bag of home-made food on the table nearby.

STELLA

I brought you some proper food. Who knows what hog-wash they serve in here.

A male NURSE (30s) spots the bag and rushes to Stella.

NURSE

Ma’am, you’re not allowed to bring food. The patients will receive their lunch in an hour. You will have to put the food back in the bag.

Stella obeys, fussing.
STELLA
Geez, am I in a prison? Fine.
(to Eva)
I’ll save it for when you come back home. Which
will be soon, right?

Eva doesn’t have the answer. She looks weak, vulnerable, human. Like never before.

EVA
I don’t feel okay. Please don’t leave me here. Please.
Help me.

DEREK
We’ll get you out very soon.

Veronica shyly approaches. Ed steps aside and so does Derek.

Veronica stands in front of Eva - ashamed and guilty. Eva doesn’t utter a word, as the
wound hasn’t healed yet.

Veronica spots Eva’s messy hair. She reaches for her backpack, takes out a hair brush.

Veronica silently stands behind her mom and gently combs her hair.

Eva closes her eyes surrounded by her family while the other patients in the mental facility
continue with their everyday activities.

EXT. AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL - FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

It's commencement ceremony. Family, friends and guests sit on the benches.

On the football field. Hundreds of senior students sit on chairs behind a microphone.
Principal Meyers calls the names of the graduating students.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Ronda Mane!

RONDA MANE (18), a cute redhead stands up and goes to pick up her diploma, waves at
the audience and goes back to her chair.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Veronica McCauley!

ON EVA, DEREK, STELLA AND ED IN THE AUDIENCE
All clap except for Eva who can’t. She simply smiles excited that it’s her daughter’s turn. Stella puts two fingers in her mouth and whistles.

ON VERONICA

Veronica walks to the Principal who hands her diploma with a fake smile.

Veronica looks at her family in the audience then glances at the microphone, approaches it. The Principal looks at her perplexed.

VERONICA
(into microphone)
Uhm, hi. I want to say something. My mother has ALS and she wants to die with dignity. She’s the most courageous person I know.

The Principal rushes to Veronica furious but Veronica stands tall and heads back to her chair. Everybody is frozen silent. Suddenly one person stands up and shouts. It’s Ally.

ALLY
Yeah!

Ally starts clapping, a couple other students applaud as well but it’s an awkward fading applause. Veronica doesn’t really care. She walks back to her seat, sits down and smiles. She did the right thing.

ON EVA

Tears run down Eva’s face.

EXT. AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL - FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

The ceremony is over. The crowd has dispersed. Ally rushes over to Veronica.

ALLY
Dude, this was awesome. Where did you get these balls from?

Veronica spots her family approaching in the distance.

VERONICA
I guess it’s a family trait.
Veronica looks at Ally for a second, the war is over. They hug each other tightly. Ally lets Veronica go as Eva, Stella, Ed and Derek arrive next to them.

Veronica goes to Eva. She lifts her trembling hand to wipe her tears away. Veronica gently wipes them for her.

INT. EVA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A post-graduation gathering. Ally and Veronica chat on the couch. Stella rushes in with another plate of food which she puts on the table along with the other snacks. Derek and Ed drink beers.

Eva is there, too, in her wheelchair. She looks happy but absent. Her daughter’s understanding came a little too late.

Veronica looks at Eva, then at Derek. Veronica and Derek nod at each other. Veronica gets up, gathers everybody’s attention.

VERONICA
I want to make an announcement.

Veronica and Derek approach Eva. Derek takes out a folded photo copy of a contract from the inner pocket of his jacket. He hands it to Eva.

Eva looks at the document perplexed.

EVA
What’s that?

VERONICA
Mom, we have news for you.

DEREK
(re: document)
That’s a lease for an apartment in Eugene, Oregon. In your name.

Eva looks at the document, then at Veronica and Derek.

EVA
But...
DEREK
I need a little break from Texas. Business is going well enough to leave it for some time.

Eva looks at Veronica - what is she going to do in Oregon...

VERONICA
You were right. I will take my time before I apply anywhere.

Eva is speechless. After all the trouble, after all the conflicts, she made it.

Ally starts clapping hands ecstatically and this time everybody APPLAUDS. Veronica embraces Eva.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - EUGENE, OREGON - DAY

Lush green trees surround the street. Veronica walks with a bag of snacks in her hand. She looks around fascinated - it’s very different from Texas.

Veronica approaches an apartment building. She looks for her keys, unlocks the door. A BOY (21), frivolous curly hair and charming eyes, just exits with a box.

BOY
How’s it going.

VERONICA
Hey.

She’s about to enter the building when the Boy turns.

BOY
Can you hold the door for me?

VERONICA
Sure.

The Boy places the box in the trunk of his car parked in the street. He disappears back inside the apartment building. A few second later, he shows up carrying another box.

BOY
Almost done.
The Boy puts the box in the car’s trunk. He goes back into the building, passes by Veronica, smiles apologetically.

VERONICA
Take your time. I can sleep while standing.

The Boy runs out carrying a bicycle. Drops it in his car then goes back to Veronica. He wipes his right hand on his jeans. The Boy offers Veronica his hand to shake. They lock eyes. He’s cute. She’s cute, too.

VERONICA
Veronica.

BOY
Sebastian. Thanks.

Sebastian gives Veronica one last charming look then goes to his car. Veronica enters the building, smiling.

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Veronica walks in the living room where Eva sits calm and poised in her wheelchair, staring through the window.

Veronica takes out a box of cookies from the bag and approaches Eva.

VERONICA
Chocolate chip, just like you ordered, ma’am.

EVA
Thank you, sweetie.

Veronica opens the box, Eva reaches with her trembling hand but Veronica puts the cookie in Eva’s mouth instead. Eva closes her eyes as she chews slowly.

They hear the door open and Derek enters with Robert. Robert leaves his small suitcase on the floor and goes to kiss Eva.

ROBERT
Hey gorgeous.

Eva points at the cookie box. Robert shakes head no.
ROBERT
I’m gluten-free now.

Eva gives Robert a skeptical look.

ROBERT
Ah well.

Robert grabs a handful of cookies. They all hear the familiar sound of the old RV engine. Veronica peeks through the window. Stella and Ed park in the street.

VERONICA
Looks like we’re all here. Guys sorry but I’ll have to steal her for a moment. Girls’ business.

Veronica rolls Eva’s wheelchair out of the room.

Derek smiles at Robert. It’s awkward but peaceful.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Derek sits on the bed. Eva in the wheelchair next to him, in a beautiful dress, light make up. Her hair is curled up and she looks beautiful in a very elusive, ephemeral way.

Derek stands up, kneels down, takes Eva’s face in his hands, and gently kisses her. They stay like that for a few seconds. Derek lets go of Eva’s face. They remain with their eyes closed, face to face, breathing each other’s breath.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eva, Derek, Veronica, Stella, Ed and Robert sit at the table finishing dinner. Next to Eva sits the health care representative ALEXA (30s), short hair, jeans and shirt.

VERONICA
Can I have the lasagna?

Stella hands the lasagna to Derek who passes it to Veronica.

DEREK
It’s delicious, Stella.
STELLA
Thanks. I rarely get the chance to unleash in the kitchen.

Ed leans towards Derek. Ed only thinks he whispers, but actually speaks loud enough for everybody to hear.

ED
She steals from Martha Stewart.

Veronica laughs, Stella frowns.

STELLA
I think someone is headed for a diet.

Robert turns to Alexa.

ROBERT
Weather in Eugene is not as bad as I expected.

ALEXA
We should do a weather swap. Some of your Texas sunshine for Oregon rain.

ROBERT
Uhm... No, thank you.

Eva is the only one at the table who isn’t speaking but she’s listening. Even though she breathes with difficulty she has a smile on her face.

Stella glances at the untouched plate of food in front of Eva.

EVA
(slowly)
I think it’s time.

Eva turns to Alexa who smiles at her soothingly.

Everybody slowly gets up from the table.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Derek carries Eva to the bed, carefully places her in a sitting position. Around the bed are Stella, Ed, Robert, Veronica.
Alexa sits on the edge of the bed holding a glass of liquid drug.

ALEXA
As you know, the taste is unpleasant. I have some juice for a chaser.

Alexa points at a glass of orange juice at the night stand.

EVA
Okay.

ALEXA
Take your time.

Alexa gets up. Eva nods at Veronica and she sits on the edge of the bed. Veronica takes Eva’s hand in hers.

VERONICA
Mom, I’ll miss you.

EVA
I’ll always be with you.

Veronica kisses Eva’s hand.

Eva looks at every single one of her family.

EVA
It was a great journey. I love you, guys.
(to Alexa)
Let’s get down to business.

Alexa gives Eva the glass with the liquid drink, helps Eva drink it. Eva’s face scorches.

EVA
(to Stella)
Worse than your teas.

Eva finishes the drug, hands the glass to Alexa. Alexa gives Eva the juice and she takes a sip. Derek helps Eva lay down.

EVA
(to Derek)
Can you lay next to me?
ROBERT
Hey, I want spooning too.

Derek lays on the bed behind Eva, gently embraces her.

EVA
(whispers so only Derek could hear)
What we had was real, right? It was true?

DEREK
Of course it was true. And it will live forever through that lady over there.
(re: Veronica)
She is made of love.

Eva smiles satisfied, then closes her eyes.

Derek leans towards Eva’s ear and whispers.

DEREK
Good night.

Off of Eva’s beautiful, peaceful face.

INT. BAR - AUSTIN - NIGHT

Months later.

People sit on tables in front of a small stage. Intimate atmosphere. On the stage, on a bar stool sits Derek, holding a guitar, a microphone in front of him. Derek finishes the last chords of a song. The people in the bar APPLAUD him.

DEREK
Y’all know the next one. Used to sing it with a very special person. Wherever you are now, this is for you. Thank you.

Derek plays HARVEST MOON.

EXT. NORTH AUSTIN - STREET - DAY

Derek singing Harvest Moon overlaps.
Robert and a dozen people have gathered for the opening of the new theater, a two story building away from the skyscrapers of Downtown, in a more relaxed neighborhood in Austin.

Robert takes off the curtain covering a small sign next to the entrance of the building - “THE EVA ECKHART THEATER.”

EXT./INT. RV - TRAILER PARK - NIGHT

Harvest Moon still playing.

The RV is parked in a trailer park.

INSIDE

Ed snores, Stella elbows him. He wakes up stressed, sees her and kisses her forehead.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF OREGON CAMPUS - DAY

Derek’s performance of Harvest Moon fades away.

Veronica, a little more feminine now, wearing a dress, walks around campus with her backpack on.

She finds a bench and sits on it. Takes her books and notes out.

A BOY on a bicycle rides past the bench and the gust of air takes a page of Veronica’s notes. The Boy turns his head to look back at Veronica and accidentally turns the handlebars sharply and he flies off the bike.

VERONICA

Shit.

Veronica runs to see if the Boy is okay. She looks at his face - it’s Sebastian.

Sebastian slowly gets up, embarrassed.

VERONICA

You okay?

SEBASTIAN

Yeah. I just... There was this squirrel, didn’t want to run it over.
Veronica looks around - no squirrels whatsoever. She looks back at Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN
Don’t I know you?

VERONICA
I don’t think so.

Liar. She remembers him well.

Veronica picks up the note that flew away and goes back to the bench. She keeps looking at Sebastian who checks the damage on his bicycle.

SEBASTIAN
Should have worn a helmet.
       (rubs his head)
I think I have a slight concussion. Do you think you can walk me to class?

Veronica looks at her books, then back at Sebastian.

VERONICA
To protect you from the squirrels?

Veronica puts her books in her backpack. Sebastian grins. They start walking.

SEBASTIAN
Undergrad?

VERONICA
Not yet.

SEBASTIAN
What major?

VERONICA
Theater.

SEBASTIAN
Cool.

Veronica and Sebastian keep walking and talking. Their voices fade away.

THE END