

INT. WELLSTONE CANCER CARE CLINIC - HALLWAY - DAY

Wellstone is a modern new building, with large windows on the waterfront side, featuring the comings and goings of ships and ferries crossing Elliott Bay. Local art hangs on the walls, and the atmosphere is upbeat, more like a club than a medical facility.

NURSE TRISHA (22) exits an exam room, almost bumping into MEL SHERIDAN (34), who steps aside. Trisha is tall, with long blonde hair and upscale couture clothing. Mel is 5'2" (on a good day) and wears 1970s bell bottoms with a matching sweater, a cap on her pageboy hairstyle.

TRISHA

Mel! So good to see you. You know, everybody around here just loves your mom. She's so funny. Such a bright nature and a positive attitude.

MEL

Yeah, I guess it skips a generation.

Mel takes a step toward the exam room door.

TRISHA

Hmm? And you know, she's in, like, really good hands. Henry -- I mean Dr. Shaw -- is the best.

MEL

Good to know. Hey, we were wondering what that word means.

Mel points to the crayon drawings on the door.

MEL (CONT'D)

Is it some kind of medical jargon?

TRISHA

It's his nickname.

MEL

What does it mean?

TRISHA

Well, it was a while ago. I guess there was this patient, a little girl.

He told her he was an oncologist, and she thought that meant something like uncle, so she made him a drawing, like these ones here. And it just, like caught on. Now all the kids call him Oncodoc.

MEL

Wow. "I'm gonna go see Oncodoc!"
Totally non-threatening, like
Doogie Houser M.D.

TRISHA

Who?

MEL

Don't you know *Doogie Howser, M.D.*?
Neil Patrick Harris? Teenage
doctor?

TRISHA

I mean, I've like, heard of it.

MEL

Anyhoo. Oncodoc. That's pretty
cool.

Dr. HENRY SHAW (34) steals up behind Trisha. Henry is tall, like Trisha. Wearing his white medical jacket, he might pass for a model playing a doctor in a GQ ad.

HENRY

My ears are burning.

TRISHA

Oh, no! Are you okay?

HENRY

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Just a saying.
Means someone's talking about me.

MEL

Although, to be fair, Trisha, it's
an expression used by people over
eighty.

HENRY

What's the modern equivalent?

MEL

Don't think there is one. That's
why it went out of style.

TRISHA

I should probably get back to work,
eh boss?

With a radiant smile, Trisha leaves.

MEL

Wow. You stumped her.

HENRY

Well, she's young. Younger than you and me, anyway.

MEL

How did you know how old I am?

HENRY

Your mom must have mentioned it. You look a lot younger, though. It got me wondering, did you go to the U?

MEL

Yeah?

HENRY

When did you graduate?

MEL

2018.

HENRY

Me, too.

MEL

Wow. What a coincidence. You, me, and three thousand other people.

HENRY

I knew I recognized you. Did you get into a fight with a girl in the Hub?

MEL

(balling her fists)
Okay, she started it.

HENRY

Aw, jeez, it was you. I couldn't figure out how I knew you. God, that was hilarious.

MEL

Really? Thanks. I'm so glad my public beating and humiliation provided some entertainment for you and your genius fraternity brothers.

HENRY

How did you know I was in a
fraternity?

MEL

Please. It's practically tattooed
on your forehead.

HENRY

Okay. Which one?

MEL

You have more than one forehead?

HENRY

No, I mean which fraternity?

MEL

Aren't they all the same?

HENRY

Ouch. You must not have been in a
sorority.

MEL

And you're just now figuring that
out? I thought doctors were
supposed to be smart.

HENRY

You were badass. You gotta admit,
it was pretty funny.

Mel puts her hand on the exam room door.

MEL

Must I?

Henry covers her hand with his, lowering his voice.

HENRY

You were dignified. That's what I
remember.

Mel responds to his closeness.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Not everyone looks good in
chocolate, but you?

He clicks his teeth. Mel opens the door and enters the exam
room.

INT. WELLSTONE CANCER CARE CLINIC - EXAM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

JULIA SHERIDAN (56) is hunched over, hugging herself, but brightens and smiles when she hears the door open. She is dressed in the bright colors of a second-grade teacher. She is thin and pale, but she wears a beautiful human hair wig.

HENRY

How are you feeling today, Mrs. Sheridan?

JULIA

Like I won the lottery. Play your cards right, Doctor, and I might just remember you in my will.

HENRY

My lucky day.

MEL

But you are having symptoms...

JULIA

All the things the doctor said would happen, so I guess it must be working.

HENRY

You will tell me if it gets to be too much?

Julia nods. Henry takes his stethoscope and listens to Julia's heart.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Sorry I was late, Mrs. Sheridan. Your daughter was talking off my ear out there.

JULIA

Really? She's not usually very chatty.

HENRY

Is that right? She seems like the life of the party around here. What a sense of humor.

JULIA

And she's a writer, too.

HENRY

Why am I not surprised?

MEL

I'll just wait outside. I don't
want to get diabetes.

INT. WELLSTONE CANCER CARE CLINIC - OFFICE- DAY

Henry taps on NURSE PATTY's (50) office door. She waves him
in.

PATTY

What can I do for -- hoo?

Patty notices the bottle of Glenlivet in his hand. Her
delight quickly changes to suspicion.

PATTY (CONT'D)

What have you done?

HENRY

Nothing. I just wanted to get your
advice on something.

PATTY

Okay.

Patty slides her chair back to the sink and pours out her
tea. She grabs a paper cup from the dispenser.

PATTY (CONT'D)

Pour away.

Patty lifts the mug to her lips, taking in the aroma. She
takes a sip, letting it roll around on her tongue, eyes
closed.

PATTY (CONT'D)

Sean Connery.

HENRY

Hmm?

PATTY

You wouldn't understand. So, who do
I need to bribe, maim, or kill?

HENRY

Hopefully no one. You know Mrs.
Sheridan?

PATTY

She's great.

HENRY

And you know her daughter?

PATTY

Total cutie.

HENRY

I was thinking of asking her out.

PATTY

Which one?

HENRY

The daughter.

Patty crosses her arms, thinking.

HENRY (CONT'D)

At first, I thought she was young.
You know, too young. But it turns
out she's my age.

PATTY

Wow. Good for you.

HENRY

Really?

PATTY

I didn't think she was quite your
crowd, but yeah, good on you.

Henry throws back his drink.

HENRY

So, it's okay?

Patty turns to her computer.

PATTY

Absolutely. I'll just re-assign
Mrs. Sheridan.

HENRY

What? No, don't do that.

Patty eyes him over her glasses.

PATTY

Henry. You know the rules. No
nookie with family members.

HENRY

But I don't even know if she'll say
yes.

Patty pushes her glasses onto her head.

PATTY

Wait a minute. Women say no to you?

HENRY

This one probably will. I was
hoping I could ask her and if she
says yes...

She cocks her head. He slumps down in the side chair.

HENRY (CONT'D)

You're right, of course. I just
really like her. She's so fresh and
funny and beautiful.

PATTY

I can see if Dr. Aldron can fit her
in.

HENRY

No. I like Mrs. Sheridan. I think I
can help her.

PATTY

There's no rule against being
friends.

HENRY

Yeah.

PATTY

Why not see how that goes. If,
after a while, you notice she has
feelings for you, if she can
tolerate ---

She palms the air around his face and body.

PATTY (CONT'D)

--- All that, we can always re-
assess.

He crumples his cup and hooks it into Patty's wastebasket. He
heads for the door.

PATTY (CONT'D)

No nookie, though. Get your nookie
someplace else.

HENRY

Yeah, yeah.

PATTY

I'm proud of you.

HENRY

Why?

PATTY

You're broadening your horizons.
Something tells me that girl is
worth the effort.

HENRY

Thanks, Patty. You're the best.

She dangles the liquor bottle and drops it in her drawer.

PATTY

Anytime.

INT. SWEDISH HOSPITAL - PATIENT ROOM - NIGHT

This hospital is the typical 20th century style, with bland pastel wall hangings that encourage people to want to leave as soon as possible.

Julia is in bed, hooked up to machines. She looks spent, no make-up, but still wearing her lovely wig. Mel has pulled her chair up to the bed.

MEL

I hate this place.

JULIA

I know you do.

MEL

Don't you? Don't you ever get mad
and want to break things? It's so
unfair.

JULIA

Being here does bring up memories.
When you were a kid, it seemed like
we were always here. That was hard.
But they saved you. How could I be
angry about that? That was a
miracle.

MEL

Cancer is no miracle.

JULIA

No, that did seem unfair. I wasn't ready to die back then. But then, I didn't die. I got twelve more years. Best years of my life. Remember that guy, the poet who lived in our neighborhood? *Better it be mine to suffer/ If in suffering I can gloat/ for having torn this time from jealous death.*

Mel nods.

JULIA (CONT'D)

We both know few people beat cancer twice. But there's a certain peacefulness, knowing how it's going to end. It's going to be hard on you, sweetheart.

MEL

Don't talk about that.

JULIA

Just know I'll never be far away. I'll always be with you, be a part of you. Where I'm going, it'll be a blink of an eye and we'll all be together again. Dad, too.

MEL

You want to see Dad again?

JULIA

(eyes closed)

Course, I do.

INT. SWEDISH HOSPITAL - PATIENT ROOM - NIGHT

The lighting is dim. Julia has been disconnected from the machines. Mel hugs her mom, sobbing. Henry touches her back. Mel lets him hug her, then she pulls away, and runs.

INT. MEL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The Sheridan home, which Mel shared with her mom, is a 1920s three-story building which shows its century of wear on the outside, but is clean and comfortable inside.

A crowd of well-dressed GUESTS mingle in small groups, a few tears, murmured conversations. Some are putting on their coats, ready to leave.

Mel is speaking with her best friend, COOKIE (34). He has his arm around her shoulder. He's wearing a skin tight black shirt and skinny black jeans, with a sequined bow tie and suspenders.

Henry enters, a guest takes his coat, others gather around him to chat. Mel gathers a few plates and cups.

MEL

Oh, great. Just what I need. A pep talk from Dr. Wonderful.

COOKIE

That's her doctor? You never told me he was hot.

MEL

Down, boy. I don't think he leans that way.

COOKIE

Are you sure? Look what he's wearing. Yum.

MEL

He's just a jock. I caught him nuzzling his nurse in the hallway once. I'm surprised he didn't bring her.

COOKIE

Who would bring a date to a funeral?

MEL

I wouldn't know. I don't attend funerals as a rule. But really, I have to get out of her. I'm going up to the 'lookout.'

Cookie greets Henry at the door. Henry holds his hand out to shake, but Cookie throws his arms around his neck and hugs him.

MEL (CONT'D)

(under her breath)

Go get him, Cookie.

INT. MEL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Mel washes her hands at the sink, then goes out the back door. Henry enters, watching her. From the back door, he sees her climbing a tree.

EXT. MEL'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Henry follows Mel.

HENRY

What are you doing? Are you trying to hurt yourself?

MEL

I'm doing what humans have been doing for tens of thousands of years. I'm climbing a tree.

HENRY

Oh. Sounds like fun.

Henry drops his suit jacket in the grass. Mel mouths 'Oh, shit.' Henry takes considerably longer to get to Mel's level, about the height of the top floor of her house.

MEL

You okay?

HENRY

(looking down)

Whoa.

There is an uncomfortable silence. They say, at the same time:

HENRY (CONT'D)

Do you--

MEL

Uh, thanks for--

Mel gestured him to speak.

HENRY

I was just going to ask if you come up here often.

MEL

Not for years. I used to come up here all the time, when I was in trouble, or when my parents were fighting. I used to love it up here, I could watch people, but on one never looked up. Do you believe that?

HENRY

You like eavesdropping on other people's conversations.

MEL

Well, I did see my next-door-neighbor's daughter having sex with her boyfriend once.

HENRY

So, uh, 'Mel,' I always wondered. Is it short for something? Melissa? Melanie? Melody? Mmmm, Melvin?

MEL

Melinda.

HENRY

Your mom said you're a writer. I'm guessing, poetry?

MEL

Ack. No. I'm an editor for Windsor Press. Mom meant a novel. But I'll never finish it.

HENRY

Why not?

MEL

It's not like anyone's paying me to write books.

HENRY

How about the first thing in the morning, you open your laptop, and that first hour's just for you? Your clients can wait that long, can't they.

Mel shrugs.

HENRY (CONT'D)

If ever you'd like someone to read it, I'd love to.

MEL

It looks like people are leaving. Would you mind checking if everyone's gone? I hate long goodbyes at the door.

HENRY

Sure. You want me to come back up?

MEL

That's okay. I'm fine, really. But thanks for helping my mom.

(MORE)

MEL (CONT'D)

And thanks for gallantly saving me
from falling out of this tree.

Henry climbs down, with more 'oops, oh, let's see.' He calls
up to Mel.

HENRY

Um, Mel? Everyone seems to be gone,
but the door is locked. Sorry, my
keys are in my coat.

She climbs down.

INT. MEL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Mel enters, Henry follows. She peeks under the foil on a
bowl, pulls out two forks, and they eat chicken salad right
out of the bowl.

MEL

Why do people bring food to a
funeral. What's that about?

HENRY

Most people find it comforting.

Mel offers him a glass of wine. Pours one for herself.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Do you... I mean, is there someone
you can talk to?

MEL

Is that your way of asking if I'm
dating? I don't do relationships.

HENRY

What do you mean?

MEL

No point. I'm not going to be
around that long.

HENRY

Where are you going?

MEL

I mean, I'm on borrowed time. The
doctors said twenty years. It's
already been twenty-two, so...

HENRY

You mean your kidney? When you start having symptoms, you'll do dialysis and get on the list

MEL

I'm not doing that. I'm not taking a kidney away from some kid who needs it.

HENRY

You won't be taking away --

MEL

Hey, do you think you could take some of these cookies and candy to your office?

HENRY

Sure.

He sips his wine, watching her. She bags up the sweets in a ziplock bag.

MEL

So...

She pushes the bag toward him.

HENRY

I guess I should...

He puts his hand on the bag. She puts her hand over his.

MEL

Do you have to?

HENRY

No, I don't.

MEL

I... like talking to you.

HENRY

Really? I thought you hated me.

MEL

Well, that is... you are very annoying.

She looks up at him. Delicately, he tips her head back. Taking his time, he leans down and brushes lips on hers. There is still space between their bodies as they kiss.

She reaches up and strokes his chest. He moans and kisses her harder, exploring her body with his hands.

HENRY
How does this...

MEL
Oh. Side zipper.

Henry helps her remove her dress, then he lifts her onto the counter, so their heads are level.

HENRY
Are you sure about this?

MEL
Are you?

In answer, he kisses her mouth, trailing his kisses down her 1940's silk slip. He reaches up under her slip, she stops his hands.

MEL (CONT'D)
Maybe we should go upstairs.

HENRY
Okay.

He lifts her 'piggy-front,' which makes them both laugh, as he bounds up the stairs.

INT. MEL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Henry sets her down and reaches to remove her slip. She holds him back. At arms length, she unbuttons his vest, undoes his tie, removes his shirt and undershirt. She unbuckles his belt, allowing his pants to fall.

She smiles at his boxer shorts and places a hand on his hip. He groans and drops his head to her neck, reaching again to remove her slip. She pulls away and turns off the light.

INT. MEL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Henry is lying in the bed in his boxer shorts. Mel is sitting up against the bedframe, enshrouded in her bathrobe. They are both breathing hard.

MEL
You are... pretty amazing.

HENRY

Thanks.

MEL

How many girlfriends have you had?

HENRY

Let's not go there.

MEL

No, really, I'm curious. Where's your phone?

She gets up and fishes his phone out of his pants pocket.

HENRY

Huh? No, Mel. Come on.

MEL

Why don't you have a security code on your phone?

HENRY

I've been meaning to do that. Give it here.

She climbs back in bed.

MEL

Relax. You're obviously a master at this sex thing. I'd just like to get a look at your pupils.

She scrolls through the photos.

MEL (CONT'D)

Wow... She's, wow. They're pretty... pretty.

HENRY

They're just friends.

MEL

Right. Wait. What's--

HENRY

Shit.

He lunges for the phone, but she's too quick.

MEL

Why do you have a picture of me?

HENRY

I asked my receptionist to take it.

MEL

Why?

HENRY

Because I liked you.

MEL

You liked me? How could you like me?

Henry shrugs. Mel looks more closely at the picture.

MEL (CONT'D)

When did you like me?

HENRY

Not long after I met you.

MEL

Why didn't you say anything?

HENRY

I thought you hated me.

MEL

Then why did you keep my picture?

He shrugs.

MEL (CONT'D)

Do you jerk off to this picture?

HENRY

No!

MEL

So, I'm not jerk-off material?

HENRY

That's not what--

MEL

It's obvious this will never work.

HENRY

What do you mean?

MEL

Look at us. Look. I look like your kid brother.

HENRY

Shut up. I like that picture.

MEL

(scrolling)

Look. Look at these women. What one trait do they all possess which I do not?

HENRY

Long hair?

MEL

Boobs, Henry. They're all a D-cup at least.

HENRY

I... don't think that's weird.

MEL

The problem is, these ones aren't going to grow.

HENRY

There's nothing wrong with your breasts, Mel. It's not size, it's sensitivity.

He reaches inside her robe and traces his finger around her areola. In spite of herself, she sighs and arches her back. He stops his hand.

HENRY (CONT'D)

That's sexy. I love your body, Mel. I wouldn't change a thing.

Her eyes pop open, she struggles to retrieve her composure.

MEL

So, how many do you think? Ballpark.

HENRY

I have no idea. The point is, they were friends. I wouldn't even call them girlfriends. I just don't like being alone. I like having fun. It's pathetic, actually. But that's all it was with them.

MEL

It's funny. I love being alone.

HENRY

That's cause you're a writer. Don't you ever get lonely?

MEL

It helps that I find people annoying.

HENRY

Am I annoying?

MEL

Totally.

HENRY

I've never been in love. Until now.

MEL

Shut up.

HENRY

I'm serious. I'm in love with you. Have been for a while.

MEL

What does that mean to you?

HENRY

It means I think about you all the time. I think about all I've been missing.

MEL

That was a good answer...

HENRY

Listen, I didn't come her for sex. I wanted to make sure you were okay. I couldn't stand the thought I'd never see you again.

MEL

Aren't you seeing that girl from your office?

HENRY

What girl?

MEL

Trisha.

He shrugs.

MEL (CONT'D)

You wanted to.

HENRY

I guess.

MEL

Why didn't you.

HENRY

Because I met someone else.

MEL

You'd better watch out. I might just fall for you.

HENRY

You mean you haven't already?

INT. MEL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

One week later. Cookie sits on the kitchen counter, eating Chinese food out of a box with chopsticks. Mel sits on the table, swinging her legs.

COOKIE

Let's get out of here. Let's go down to the Liberty.

MEL

I hate bars. I always get carded.

COOKIE

I came over to save you from mooning around the house.

MEL

I haven't been mooning. In fact, I've been writing.

COOKIE

On your book?

Mel grins, brimming with excitement.

MEL

I really think I'm onto something. I'm going to send it to my old boss.

COOKIE

That's fabulous. But seriously, I came to get you out of the house. Let's go see a corny movie.

MEL

I can't. Someone's coming over.

COOKIE

Who?

MEL

You remember that doctor?

Cookie abandons the chopsticks and starts eating with his fingers.

COOKIE

Dr. Shaw? Why's he coming over?

MEL

He was my inspiration for the novel. We...well, we slept together.

COOKIE

Shut the shades. You slept with the frat boy? Why? Scratch that. I know why. I'd be on him in a minute if he were halfway persuadable. When did this happen?

MEL

After the funeral. We climbed the tree.

COOKIE

Don't tell me you had sex in the tree.

MEL

No! But it was nice. He was nice.

COOKIE

So, he's been coming over?

MEL

Every night.

COOKIE

Wow. But taking advantage of a poor grieving girl, not cool.

MEL

No, it was at my invitation. He just looked so good.

COOKIE

Tell me about it. That Louis Vuitton suit. Not all men can wear a vest, you know.

MEL

Or should.

He reaches out to take her face in his hands.

COOKIE

My little girl is growing up.

MEL

Gross. Chicken fingers!

He washes his hands.

MEL (CONT'D)

I think I should end it, though.

COOKIE

Why?

Mel throws the takeout box in the garbage, and wipes down the counter, sink and faucet.

MEL

He's been with a lot of women.

COOKIE

Not surprised.

MEL

He's not serious. And there's that girl from his work. Trisha. Tall, long blonde hair. Shoes.

That get's Cookie's attention.

MEL (CONT'D)

Her shoes match her outfits.

He swoons.

MEL (CONT'D)

I never saw her in the same outfit twice, and we went there for a year.

COOKIE

You think they're doing the pants-off dance-off?

MEL

I could have sworn so, the way she looks at him, but he says no.

COOKIE

So?

MEL

So, she's perfect for him. She was always talking about going out dancing. They play tennis together. They carpool to work. They're the perfect couple. I'm just a fling.

COOKIE

Maybe, but why pass up good sex?

MEL

Because the last thing I need right now is to get flung. With him around, I haven't been able to deal with Mom's death. I can't do that in front of him. This isn't a good time.

COOKIE

Or maybe it's the best time. You know, "*Clench life in your fists and scorn the balm--*"

TOGETHER

"--That caution by deception seems to share!"

COOKIE

So... I have news, too. I met someone. His name is Leo Kline. I didn't want to tell you before, because of your mom and everything. He's from San Francisco. He's up here on vacation, staying with some friends. We met and just hit it off. We've been together practically every minute since.

Cookie shows her a photo on his phone.

MEL

How old is he?

COOKIE

Forty-six. Do you think that's too old?

MEL

Not at all. We're like fine wines. We mellow with age.

COOKIE

Then turn to vinegar? You just have to meet him. He's a really good person. He's kind and sensitive, nothing like the rat bastards I usually fall in love with. Leo's sick of meaningless relationships. He wants to settle down. He wants kids.

MEL

You would be a great dad.

COOKIE

I wanted you to meet him. He's waiting at the Liberty. Can we have lunch tomorrow?

MEL

Sure.

COOKIE

You're going to love him!

MEL

I'd better. Otherwise I'll have to carve out his heart with a spoon --

TOGETHER

--Slowly.

The hear the front door open.

HENRY (O.S.)

Mel?

Cookie mouths, "He has a key?"

MEL

We're in the kitchen.

Henry enters with a pizza box in one hand and a grocery bag in the other.

MEL (CONT'D)

Do you remember Cookie Benatti?

Henry puts the pizza box in Cookie's left hand and shakes his right.

HENRY

Of course. What do you do again?

COOKIE

I'm a tattoo artist.

(shrugs)

What else am I gonna do with an Art degree?

MEL

Don't be fooled. He's also an actor, singer, and a costumer extraordinaire.

HENRY

I don't see any tattoos?

COOKIE

No way. I hate needles. No offense.

HENRY

None taken. Can you stay for dinner?

COOKIE

No thanks, I have a date.

HENRY

Next time?

COOKIE

You bet.

Cookie leads Mel to the back door and gives her a hug.

COOKIE (CONT'D)

Clench it in your fists, baby.

MEL

Be naughty, Benatti.

Cookie exits, and Henry swoops in behind Mel. She turns around and he envelops her in a deep kiss. At first, she holds back, then she throws her arms around his neck.

HENRY

I like him.

MEL

Cookie?

HENRY

Definitely. I figure, if you like him, he must be a great guy.

MEL

I'm glad to hear you say that. I wanted to talk to you about something.

Stalling, she opens the refrigerator.

MEL (CONT'D)

You want a beer?

HENRY

Can't. I'm on call.

MEL

Oh. Do you get called in often?

HENRY

Depends. If it's something acute, like a fever, I might just have to stay for a couple of hours. But if it's something serious, like end of life, we always want someone from Wellstone to be there, if only for the family.

MEL

Like you were with Mom. Concierge service. It seemed like you never left.

HENRY

I did leave. You must not have come out of that room very much. Someone from Wellstone was there the whole time.

He wraps his arms around her waist.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I've been meaning to tell you, I wasn't prying back when I asked your mom about her kidney. I know she gave the other one to you. I wasn't getting into your business, I just needed to know if her remaining kidney was healthy. It affected which drugs I gave her.

MEL

If she had both kidneys, could you have given her better drugs?

HENRY

I don't know about better, just different.

She breaks away and looks in the grocery bag.

MEL

Why do you keep bringing food? I'm wall-to-wall leftovers around here.

HENRY

You hate leftovers. I just want to make sure you're eating.

MEL

I eat! I'm perfectly capable of making a peanut-butter and banana sandwich. Don't get all doctory on me.

HENRY

Sorry.

MEL

No, I'm sorry. I'm not myself these days.

HENRY

No, I mean about the banana part.

He gags.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Okay. What did you want to talk to me about?

(his phone rings)

Sorry, I have to take this.

(into the phone)

Dr. Shaw... Okay. I'll be there in fifteen minutes.

(disconnects)

Sorry.

MEL

Oh, hey. I understand. Go forth, save lives.

HENRY

I know it's your birthday tomorrow.

MEL

I don't do birthdays. I don't do parties, I don't do presents.

He looks crestfallen.

MEL (CONT'D)

Maybe we could just go out to eat?

HENRY

In public? Okay, but could you come down and meet me for lunch, too?

MEL

I just got done telling Cookie I would have lunch with him and his new boyfriend.

HENRY

Please? Everyone at the clinic wants to see you, wish you a happy birthday.

MEL

I guess I could have breakfast with Cookie.

She walks him to the door.

MEL (CONT'D)

You told them about us? At the clinic?

HENRY

Sure. They're my best friends. But it will be totally low key. No big. They just want to say hello. Okay?

EXT. SEATTLE DOWNTOWN - FIRST AVENUE - DAY

Henry holds Mel's hand as they walk down the street. She can't help but look around to see if anyone is watching.

Henry stops in front of an upscale women's clothing boutique. In the window is a mannequin wearing a form-fitting black gown, with a halter top and plunging back.

HENRY

What do you think of that?

MEL

Gorgeous.

He pulls her into the shop.

MEL (CONT'D)
Why? I'm actually hungry this time.

INT. BOUGIE BOUTIQUE - CONTINUOUS

He lets go of her hand and speaks to the SALES CLERK (25). Mel looks at a simple frock on a hanger. Notices the price, puts it back on the rack like it's on fire. Henry returns with a silky black dress over his arm.

HENRY
Not those. How about this?

Mel looks from the dress to the mannequin in the window.

MEL
No way. Don't be ridiculous.

HENRY
Why not? Come on.

MEL
It won't fit.

He clucks like a chicken. She looks around and grabs the gown, just to shut him up. She enters a dressing stall, where her feet and head show. He waits outside, beyond the clerk's vision. Mel slips the dress over her head and zips up the back. She is pleased and a little surprised.

MEL (CONT'D)
Huh. Jean Harlow would never wear underwear in a dress like this.

She disappears from view as her panties hit the floor. Henry notices.

HENRY
How's it look?

MEL
Pretty crazy.

HENRY
Let me see.

She opens the door and steps out of the stall. Henry doesn't attempt to hide his lust.

HENRY (CONT'D)

You're so beautiful. Why don't you show your body off more?

MEL

Shut the shades. It is funny, though. I can never put something on right off the rack. It always has to be altered in some way, particularly the hem.

Henry is standing behind her as they look at the full mirror.

HENRY

I have a tiny confession to make. I had it made for you.

MEL

What? How did you know my measurements?

HENRY

Trisha came down with me. We guessed.

MEL

Henry, I could never go out in public in this.

He backs her up into the stall.

HENRY

Yes, you can.

MEL

I don't think you're supposed to be in here.

Her feet disappear from view as his feet step forward.

HENRY

Then we'll have to be very quiet.

The clerk reads a magazine at the counter. She looks up at a muffled bumping sound, shrugs, and returns to her magazine.

INT. FIFTH AVENUE THEATER - LOBBY - NIGHT

There is the sound of APPLAUSE. Mel and Henry duck out of the theater to beat the crowd.

She is wearing the black gown, with rhinestone earrings and matching necklace, and a cloche hat.

Henry is wearing a 1950's rented tuxedo with a stingy-brim hat cocked to the side. He is holding her velvet jacket. Mel takes off out onto the street, he follows.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE THEATER ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Henry catches up with her and lasso's her with her jacket and dips her for a kiss.

TRISHA

Henry!

Trisha approaches on the arm of CORY (25). He is dressed in a fashionable suit that stretches over his muscled biceps and thighs. With cropped hair and well-kept stubble, he is Ken to Trisha's Barbie.

TRISHA (CONT'D)

I thought it was you! We just got out of our movie.

Trisha hugs Henry, forcing Mel to take a step back.

TRISHA (CONT'D)

Wow, Mel. What a great dress.

CORY

Join us for a drink?

Mel shakes her head in panic, but Henry doesn't notice.

HENRY

Sure. Come on.

Henry and Trisha cross Fifth Avenue to the pub, leaving Mel with Cory. He walks in languid strides. Mel has no choice but to keep his pace as he holds up traffic.

CORY

You must be a model, right?

MEL

Huh. Hardly.

CORY

Have you known Henry long?

MEL

Kinda.

CORY

How'd you meet?

MEL

Through... my mom.

They arrive at the pub's entrance. Cory opens the door, then blocks it with his arm.

CORY

That dress, Mel. You are killing me.

MEL

S-sorry.

She ducks under his arm and enters the pub.

INT. ELEPHANT & CASTLE PUB - CONTINUOUS

Henry waves them over to a table. Mel buttons up her velvet jacket. Cory keeps his eyes on Mel.

HENRY

Cory, you didn't know Trisha plays basketball? She's hot stuff on the court.

TRISHA

Shut up.

HENRY

She did Varsity. She plays with some of my buddies and me.

TRISHA

None of my girlfriends play anymore, so if I play at all, I play with guys.

HENRY

Do you play, Cory?

CORY

(eyes on Mel)
Sure. Sounds fun.

A WAITER approaches the table.

WAITER

What will you have?

HENRY

Whatever's on tap.

TRISHA/CORY/MEL

Same.

WAITER

(to Mel)

Can I see some ID?

Everyone laughs, and Mel produces her driver's license, grinding her teeth.

HENRY

Trisha plays tennis, too.

TRISHA

Cut it out. I'm not that good.

HENRY

Remember when we played doubles with that couple? They were so competitive.

TRISHA

I felt kinda bad. They were yelling at each other on the court.

HENRY

Yeah, we're not like that. We know how to communicate on court.

CORY

(hand on Mel's back)

Maybe we could all play doubles.

Mel leaps to her feet. They all stare at her.

MEL

Well, I should be going. It was... nice seeing you all.

Mel makes a quick exit. Henry follows.

EXT. ELEPHANT & CASTLE PUB - ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

HENRY

What's the matter?

MEL

That guy was hitting on me. Such a creep. You didn't even notice.

HENRY

What?

MEL

And there's obviously something going on with you and Trisha.

HENRY

No. No no no... that was nothing.

MEL

Look, I hate that I'm jealous, but I can't do this. I don't do sports, I don't like to go out drinking. This isn't me. You have all these friends. Why can't we be just... friends?

HENRY

I don't want to be friends. I mean, I do, but I want more. Look, I'm sorry. I cooked up this whole thing. I asked Trisha to bump into us. I just thought... a big night on the town, I thought I could cure you of your shyness. Miserable failure, obviously. That's the only reason she showed up.

MEL

I don't want you to change your life for me.

HENRY

But that's the thing. I have changed. All year, since I met you, I've been trying to show you that. I used to check the schedule to see when your mom was coming in, even if it wasn't to see me, just so I could bump into you in the hallway.

He takes her hand.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I've been with lots of women, I know, but it was always just friends. That was all I wanted. Cause of work, I guess. But with you, I want more. I've never wanted anything as much as this.

He pulls her in.

HENRY (CONT'D)

This is new to me, too. Give me another chance, okay?

MEL

We look funny together. People think you're my dad.

He stifles a laugh. She gives into his warmth.

HENRY

Well, in that case, we better get you home. Don't want to miss your curfew.

INT. MEL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Mel has her phone propped up behind the sink, facetimeing with Cookie.

MEL

How's San Francisco?

COOKIE

Heaven. No wonder Leo's so fit. He lives on one of those really steep streets. I thought I was gonna see Jesus the first time, I was huffin' and a'puffin'. He's so great. I've never been with someone like him. He genuinely seems to like being with me.

MEL

Well, duh.

COOKIE

I'm learning to trust. To talk about things. Like, you know how I like to leave the butter on the counter.

MEL

So it melts on toast. Who doesn't?

COOKIE

He doesn't! Every time I went into the kitchen, it would be in the fridge. So I thought, 'Oh God, he thinks I'm some slob who can't clean up after himself.' But I didn't say anything.

(MORE)

COOKIE (CONT'D)

Then we were at a restaurant, and the rolls came all warm, and I said, 'I love it when the butter is melty,' and Leo goes, 'Is that why you leave it on the counter?' He pretty much told me, whatever's on my mind, whether it's something trivial or something really big, he wants to hear about it.

MEL

Wow.

COOKIE

How's Henry? Is he stoked that your book is getting published?

MEL

He should be. He was my inspiration. My main character was so noir and depressive, I was sick of him. As soon as I started to think of the guy as a loveable rascal, everything fell into place. I just couldn't stop writing. Except... Henry wants me to meet his dad, and his dad's girlfriend-slash-business partner.

COOKIE

What's wrong with that?

MEL

It's too soon.

COOKIE

Too soon? You've been together three months.

MEL

I won't know what to say to them. They're really close with Henry. They travel the world for their work, but they never miss his birthday. I wish you were here. You're like Mom, you always know what to say in any situation.

COOKIE

Just be yourself, Bambolina. Don't try to fake it, in hopes that they'll like you. Just be the person Henry loves. That's all you need to do. You want me to fly up?

MEL

No. I'm just so tired these days, I can't think.

COOKIE

Why are you so tired?

A DOORBELL rings on Cookie's end.

COOKIE (CONT'D)

Shoot. I have a client. I have to go. Call me every five minutes!

They disconnect. Mel picks up her phone.

MEL

Just be the person Henry loves. Who's that?

EXT. MEL'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY

Henry is fussing with the barbecue. Mel enters from the garden gate with a cakebox.

HENRY

Where have you been? I was about to climb the tree looking for you.

MEL

I went to pick up your favorite cake from *Le Fournil*.

HENRY

The Opera Cake? Did I ever tell you you're my favorite person?

MEL

I figured you would enjoy your birthday more if I didn't burn the house down trying to bake for you.

HENRY

You know what would really top it off? Let's get a puppy.

MEL

Too much commitment! I'm still getting used to you.

PERRY SHAW (62) calls from the gate.

PERRY

Hello?

In a momentary panic, Mel looks like she's going to bolt. Henry takes her by the shoulders and gives her an encouraging kiss, then saves the cake from slipping out of her fingers.

Perry and Lily (46) enter the yard through the gate. Perry looks like Henry, perhaps an inch shorter, but the same heart-stopping smile. Lily is tall and comfortable in her own body. With her tanned skin, she wears no make-up, and her long hair is pulled back in a pretty barrette.

PERRY (CONT'D)

We knocked, but no answer.

Mel offers her hand to Perry, who takes her into a bear hug instead.

PERRY (CONT'D)

Henry told us about your mom. I'm so sorry.

MEL

Thanks.

LILY

I brought some salad fixings. Show me the kitchen?

MEL

Sure.

Mel and Lily enter the kitchen.

INT. MEL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lily empties the contents of a grocery bag onto the counter.

MEL

Can I help?

LILY

Henry told us you don't like to cook.

MEL

I do okay with supervision.

Lily hands Mel a box of cherry tomatoes. Mel takes out two cutting boards and two knives.

LILY

I love what you're wearing. Henry told us you were into vintage clothes. How did you get into that?

MEL

High school. Everyone thought I was weird anyway. I figured I'd go all the way, you know. I guess it stuck.

LILY

Absolutely.

Lily offers Mel a high five.

LILY (CONT'D)

Weird people units! You know, Henry doesn't talk to us about his girlfriends. To tell you the truth, we have a hard time telling them apart. But you - you he wants to talk about.

MEL

Uh oh. What does he say?

LILY

Just that he loves you. Sorry, that's not a surprise, is it?

MEL

No. I sometimes wonder, 'Why me?'. I mean, it's obvious I'm nothing like his previous girlfriends.

LILY

Well, he's never wanted to live with one of his girlfriends. That seems like he wants a change.

MEL

When we're home, it's great. But when we go out, I don't fit in. I don't mesh with his girlfriends. I'm afraid he misses that life. Novelty is one thing, but what happens when he decides to go back to the way he used to be?

LILY

Perry was like that when we first met.

MEL

Really?

Both women look out the window at the two men exploring the garden and talking. Lily returns to the cutting board while Mel continues to watch Henry.

LILY

He was still young when his wife died, and you know, handsome, successful, charming. It's no wonder women have always been attracted to him. But he never wanted to find love. He wanted company, companionship... but if things got too close, he would move on.

MEL

But then he met you.

LILY

No, he was still like that when we met.

Henry makes eye contact with Mel through the window and waves.

LILY (CONT'D)

After a while, I developed feelings for him, so I was honest with him. I told him I needed more. We broke up. We got together a few months later, and by that point, he'd figured out what he wanted. Since then, we've been totally committed to each other. We know how lucky we are.

MEL

But you never got married?

LILY

Marriage is just a piece of paper. Our relationship is no less permanent without it.

EXT. MEL'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Mel and Lily carry the salad bowl, plates and silverware out to the yard. There is an ice bucket on the picnic table and four wine glasses.

PERRY

There you are. I can't wait for the full tour, but I've been admiring your garden. Henry says your mom did this?

MEL

She loved her garden. She was always out her puttering, even when she was sick.

PERRY

And what about you. Henry tells us you're a writer.

MEL

(groaning)

Would you stop telling people that? I'm an editor. You're not a writer until you get published. Until then, it's all in your head. It's not real until someone reads it.

Henry wraps his arms around her from behind.

HENRY

But you're getting published now.

MEL

It won't be out for ages. Until strangers read it, it's not real. Good or bad, you can't get real satisfaction from writing.

(to Perry)

Henry told me you do green architecture. I don't really know what that is. Do you just plan your buildings around the trees?

Perry spins the blades on the garden windmill.

PERRY

Well, kind of. Okay, picture this: you're in an office building, trudging from one stressful meeting to another, and instead of walking down a hallway, you get there by walking through a garden path, just like this one. Open to the air, on the eighth floor, the tenth floor. All the floors.

MEL

But these aren't potted plants?

PERRY

Not at all. No, there's dirt and moss under your feet, just like this garden. The soil is monitored electronically. The pipes are all hidden, you never see them. And the plants look lush all year.

MEL

Wow.

PERRY

Buildings don't have to be cold steel and concrete. They can be living things. We can change the way we live and work in cities, one building at a time.

Lily brings wine to Perry and Mel. Mel doesn't drink.

MEL

Your work sounds fascinating.

PERRY

I've never thought of what I do as work. I would do what I do for nothing.

LILY

But don't let his clients that.

PERRY

I get to travel the world with the woman I love. We've met the most extraordinary friends. Why would I want that to stop?

Henry takes Mel's face in his hands. She looks like she might cry.

MEL

I hear you.

INT. MEL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Mel wakes, gets the covers off and her legs to the side with effort. After a moment, she puts on her robe and heads downstairs. Hearing voices, she sits on the step.

TRISHA (O.S.)

Never?

HENRY (O.S.)

Well...

TRISHA (O.S.)

Not ever? Not even for coffee,
dinner?

HENRY (O.S.)

Well, yes, but when we go out, I
get the feeling she's on edge, you
know? Afraid something will happen.

TRISHA (O.S.)

Like what?

HENRY (O.S.)

Like somebody who knows me will
stop by and say hi.

TRISHA (O.S.)

So? I don't get it.

HENRY (O.S.)

She's just very shy.

TRISHA (O.S.)

So you never go out anymore? What
about the party?

HENRY (O.S.)

Ugh. I don't think so.

TRISHA (O.S.)

You can't just let her boss you. If
you want her to come, you have to
tell her.

HENRY (O.S.)

She'll probably say no.

Sound of the back door OPENING.

TRISHA (O.S.)

You shouldn't have to give up all
your friends because you're afraid
she'll have a heart attack.

HENRY (O.S.)

It's not like that, it's fine.

Sound of the back door CLOSING.

Mel hugs herself on the step. She goes to her mother's room,
hesitating at the door.

She enters and takes in her mom's fragrance that remains. She takes the framed poem off the wall, shakes her head and drops it on the bed.

She sits at her mother's vanity, looking at the greeting cards and well wishes. She puts her mother's wig on her head and looks at herself in the mirror.

MEL

Why can't I be more like you?

She pulls the wig off, pulls at her own hair. Then she takes out a pair of scissors from the drawer, and cuts off a lock of hair.

INT. MEL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Later that day, Mel is still in her pajamas, wearing a stocking cap, seated at the kitchen table, staring at her laptop. Henry comes in the back door with a takeout bag.

HENRY

Hey.

Mel doesn't respond.

HENRY (CONT'D)

You okay?

Mel nods and gets up for plates and silverware.

MEL

How was work?

HENRY

We lost a patient today. A sweet old man named Mr. MacKenzie. Eighty-seven years old. He was a dirty old man, though. He totally flirted with the staff, but he was so funny. Did you ever meet him?

MEL

I did meet that handsy old coot.

HENRY

He went into hospice last month. Then today he died. Everyone's broken up at the office.

MEL

Why do you do it?

HENRY

Do what?

MEL

Oncology. If you wanted to be a doctor, why would you choose the most hopeless field of medicine?

HENRY

It's not hopeless. Not at all. We understand so much more about cancer, now. How to treat it, even some cures. It's amazing what we're learning about cancer on a genetic level. In some cases, we can change the genetic code of a tumor and turn it off.

MEL

But how many of your patients die?

HENRY

(shrugs)
All of 'em.

MEL

Don't be a smartass. You know what I mean.

HENRY

Honey, I'm sorry I couldn't do more for your mom. But Mel, she lived for a year.

MEL

No she didn't. She died for a year. You have no idea what it was like for her. You saw her once or twice a month for ten minutes. You have no idea what she went through.

HENRY

Okay, maybe I haven't been through it personally, but do understand. She didn't have many options but she chose the best she could.

MEL

But what was the point? What did she get out of it?

HENRY

Time with you.

MEL

Don't you say that. Don't you dare say that to me. I didn't ask her do to it. I would never have put her through that. If, and when I get cancer, I'll never let some doctor talk me into all that shit. I'm going to live until I can't take it, then I'm getting drugs. That's it.

HENRY

You're not saying I coerced her?

MEL

I'd say you charmed her. And she charmed you right back. 'Thank you so much, doctor. I'm really feeling better now. You've helped so much.' She was more worried about hurting your feelings than telling you what was really going on. She gave up everything, Henry. Her work, her friends, her breasts, her hair. She ended up with a body that was rotten, poisoned. Why would anyone want to go through that? Why would you want to watch them go through it?

HENRY

I don't think we should be talking about this. I mean, I think you should talk to someone. But if I argue with you, it sounds like I'm saying blame your mother for the choices she made. I'm not saying that.

MEL

Come to think of it, this is a breach of ethics, isn't it? You're sleeping with the daughter of one of your patients.

HENRY

She's not my patient anymore.

MEL

Thanks for reminding me.

HENRY

What's going on?

MEL

You lied.

HENRY

About what?

MEL

Why she died. Why I had to take her off the machine.

HENRY

Mel, I told you, it wouldn't have made any difference if she had both kidneys.

MEL

Bullshit. She's dead because of me.

Mel removes her hat.

HENRY

That's not true. It happens-- God, what have you done?

MEL

I might as well tell you now, I'm not getting on any list. When this kidney goes, I'm out. If you can't accept that, you might as well go, now.

HENRY

Mel.

Mel opens the back door.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I accept.

Mel returns and faces him.

HENRY (CONT'D)

It's your body. I hope you'll change your mind someday, but I accept that it's your choice.

Mel falls into his embrace.

MEL

I went into her room today.

HENRY

How did that go?

MEL

It still smells like her. Like she just stepped out for a moment. Like she's still here. I think I'm losing my mind.

HENRY

You lost your best friend. That doesn't make you crazy. It makes you human.

He takes her head in his hands.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Your eyes look about ten times bigger.

MEL

I shaved everything. Everything I could reach. Except my eyelashes.

HENRY

Yeah, don't do that. You need your eyelashes.

MEL

Do you want me to shave you?

HENRY

After. I want to be with you. I want to be under your skin, I want to be in your veins. I want to flow through your beating heart and breathe the air you breathe. I want to electrocute myself in the shit storm that goes on inside your brain.

He kisses her passionately.

INT. MEL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM DAY

Mel sits on her bed, facetimeing with Cookie.

MEL

I have a problem.

COOKIE

Do you have cancer?

MEL

No. Long story. A different problem.

She holds a wand up to the camera.

COOKIE

Pregnant! I thought you were on the pill.

MEL

I am. This was from before. The dress shop?

COOKIE

(inhaling the words)

Oh, my God. But that was a long time ago.

MEL

Three months. My first and only time I've had unprotected sex. What are the odds?

COOKIE

You should do a PSA for teenage girls. How long have you known?

MEL

Today. I just figured it out. I've been so tired lately, bone tired. Food tastes funny. My periods are so irregular, or just regularly non-existent, I never believed I could get pregnant.

COOKIE

It's a miracle.

MEL

He'll want to get married.

COOKIE

What's wrong with that?

MEL

I don't know about us. It's too soon. I mean, I love him. I know I'll never love anyone like I love him. But what if he's like his dad? Never really settling down.

COOKIE

But Perry did settle down. They're great together, aren't they?

MEL

I don't want it to be like my parents. I don't want my daughter to have to grow up blaming herself cause her parents split up.

COOKIE

Oh, sweetie. It's not the nineteenth century. You don't have to get married if you don't want to. But you do have to tell him. It's his kid, too. If by some miracle, I could have a biological child, I would do anything be in my kid's life. I'm sure Henry's that way, too.

MEL

I know.
(beat)
How's Leo?

COOKIE

An angel. But, speaking of getting married...

MEL

You? Oh, Cookie! I'm so happy for you. But isn't it pretty fast?

COOKIE

Yeah, I know. But it feels right.

MEL

Don't you ever get scared or have doubts?

COOKIE

Sometimes. But I try to remind myself that I suck at mind-reading. We love each other. If we can talk about the little things, then we'll be ready for the big stuff.

MEL

Takes courage.

COOKIE

I wouldn't say that. Commitment, maybe. Trust. I feel better after I talk to Leo. You will, too. Henry's gonna be thrilled. You'll see.

MEL

It's funny. I actually thought I was dying. Tired, sleeping all the time. And peeing all the time. Thought I was winding down. It's about time, kidney-wise. I kept it from Henry because I knew he would hover. He would try to fix it, because that's what he does. But I was okay with it. Dying, you know. I really was.

She touches her stomach.

MEL (CONT'D)

But now, for the first time in my life, I want a future. I want to be there for her or him. For all of it.

INT. MEL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mel paces the room, then checks out the window. Henry stumbles up the front steps. He is bald. Mel opens the door.

MEL

A taxi? Why didn't Trisha drop you off?

He shakes his head and collapses on the couch.

MEL (CONT'D)

You said you had a meeting?

HENRY

One of my patients committed suicide today. We had to have a meeting to see if anyone noticed anything I missed. I didn't even know he was depressed. I knew he was taking anti-depressants, but we didn't really talk about that. I guess I got careless.

MEL

I'm sure it wasn't your fault.

HENRY

I'm supposed to recognize the signs.

MEL

Was he dying?

HENRY

That's the thing. He was in remission.

MEL

You didn't fail him. You're a good doctor. Mom always felt like she was your only patient. I know she wasn't depressed, although God knows why not, but she knew that if she needed you, you would be there for her.

HENRY

I don't know.

He drops his head down into her lap.

MEL

In a weird way, maybe the cancer helped your patient. It was real. It gave him focus. You helped him with that. He had appointments to keep and a regimen to follow. But when that went away, maybe he was left with the monster in his head, and that was too much for him.

He shakes his head. She puts her arms around his shoulders.

MEL (CONT'D)

If you didn't know he was depressed, it's because he didn't want you to know. Take my word for it, it's what we do. We hide it. We're good liars. I'm sure you asked him how he was doing, he probably said 'fine.' Because if he said he wasn't doing so well, you'd have asked 'why?' and then, and then, the dam might break.

(beat)

For some reason, that's the worst thing that can happen. For another person to see the monster inside.

HENRY

Have you ever felt like that?

MEL

Suicidal? No. I've longed for death. But for me, it's cyclical.

(MORE)

MEL (CONT'D)

I've learned that however wretched
I may feel, I know it's temporary.
So, I go on.

HENRY

If you ever get that way, do you
promise me you'll talk to someone?
It doesn't have to be me.

MEL

Sure.

HENRY

I gotta get in the shower.

Mel is left on the couch, deep in thought. She practically
leaps out of her skin when Henry's phone rings beside her on
the couch. She answers it.

TRISHA (O.S.)

Henry? Can you talk?

Mel, stunned, can't answer right away.

TRISHA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Are you okay ?

(sniffs)

I'm sorry. Okay? I'm really sorry.
You know how I feel. I thought you
would understand.

MEL

No, Trisha, it's Mel.

TRISHA (O.S.)

Oh. I was just... Um... I was
worried about Henry. When he left
the bar, he seemed pretty upset.

Mel flings the phone onto the couch and goes up to her
bedroom.

INT. MEL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mel sits up in bed, arms crossed. Henry returns from the
shower and rubs his head dry with a towel, then realizes he
has no hair.

MEL

I'm putting the house on the
market.

HENRY

Why?

MEL

Mortgage. Mom had to borrow to the limit to pay her medical bills. I can't keep carrying this debt. I need out. I've been looking at apartments. It doesn't matter where I live, as long as I can get internet, I can work.

HENRY

I can help you with the payments.

MEL

No. I don't want that.

HENRY

I still have my condo, we could--

MEL

--No.

HENRY

Why don't... I mean, what if... we got married?

(beat)

Are you going to answer me?

MEL

I don't think so.

HENRY

You don't think you're gonna to answer me or you don't think we should get married?

MEL

Are you feeling guilty about something?

HENRY

What?

MEL

Are you seeing someone?

HENRY

No! Jesus, what are you talking about?

(beat)

Okay, let's forget about it. Sorry I brought it up. It's your house.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

Of course, you should sell it if you want to...

Henry turns off the light.

HENRY (CONT'D)

You know, everyone is talking about us shaving our heads. Some of the staff have actually done it, too, if you can believe that. My patients love it. It's crazy.

MEL

Who's doing it?

HENRY

People from the office.

MEL

Women?

HENRY

When they found out you did it, they thought you were pretty brave. I mean, guys shave their heads sometimes, but not women. You blew them away.

MEL

Does that get you off?

HENRY

What?

MEL

It had quite an effect on you when I did it. Do you fantasize about these women?

HENRY

What are you talking about? I told you, I'm not sleeping with anyone.

MEL

Wait--it's Trisha, isn't it? Trisha shaved her head. Of course, of course.

HENRY

Okay, cut it out.

MEL

She shaved her head for you, Henry. That's a big deal.

(MORE)

MEL (CONT'D)

You just said so. She already looks like a Barbie doll. Imagine if she shaved down there, too, then she would really look like one--

HENRY

Why are you doing this?

MEL

No wonder you didn't want her to drive you home.

HENRY

I didn't want you to get upset. Look, I didn't tell her to shave her head. That's not my fault.

MEL

Oh, by the way, Trisha called.

HENRY

What?

MEL

She was worried about you. She said when you left the bar, you were pretty upset. I thought you said you had a meeting.

HENRY

That's where we had it. They wanted to have it tomorrow, but I told them I wanted to get it over with. The whole staff was there. She wasn't the only one.

MEL

No. Just the only one who was worried about you. That's sweet.

HENRY

Look, I don't know what she told you, but there's nothing going on.

MEL

Is that supposed to make me feel better?

HENRY

What do you want from me? I just asked you to marry me, and you turn around and accuse me of cheating on you. Are you having an affair?

MEL

You know I'm not.

HENRY

How? How do I know? You're a beautiful woman. You're home alone all day. And you're the queen of keeping secrets, you just told me that. There's no way I could be sure about anything, except I love you, and that means I trust you. I have to ask myself, do you love me? I need an answer this time.

MEL

We've been together for over three months, Henry. You're well past your sell-by date. It's about time you had a real woman.

HENRY

This is bullshit, Mel. I'm not doing this.

He grabs his clothes and stomps down the stairs. When Mel hears the front door SLAM, she buries her face in her pillow and screams.

INT. HARBORVIEW HOSPITAL - EXAM ROOM - NIGHT

Mel is dressed, sitting on one of the side chairs, utterly drained, staring off into space, clutching her abdomen. Henry taps on the door. Mel takes a deep breath. He enters, and approaches tentatively.

HENRY

Mel? Can I come in?

MEL

Sure.

HENRY

I was doing my rounds. Somebody said they saw you. Are you okay? What happened?

MEL

I lost it.

HENRY

Lost what?

MEL

Baby.

HENRY

A baby? I... I don't get it. I thought you were on the pill.

MEL

It was from before. My birthday.

HENRY

Oh God. The dress shop. Jesus. Why didn't you tell me? Mel? Were you even going to tell me?

MEL

I was going to. I just--

She sobs in gulps and spasms.

MEL (CONT'D)

I thought I would have more time...

Henry embraces her and kisses her head.

HENRY

No. No. Shh... It's okay. I didn't mean that. I was just... surprised. You haven't returned my calls. I was worried. Shh... Look, don't cry. We can get past this. If you want a baby, we can try again.

Mel pulls away and stands. She shakes her head.

MEL

My baby is dead, Henry.

HENRY

I know. I'm sorry.

She heads for the door.

HENRY (CONT'D)

You never let me get close.

She stops, but doesn't turn.

MEL

I know.

She hugs herself tightly, and exits.

INT. MEL'S APODMENT - DAY

One year later, summer. Mel's apodment is a tiny dwelling, with a small kitchen and bathroom below, a built-in desk by the window, and her bed above the kitchen.

Mel facetimes with Cookie from her bed. Her hair has grown in, but not all the way. On her computer screen, we see LEO (47) folding laundry behind Cookie.

COOKIE

How do you like your apodment?

MEL

Good. Weird, but good. It's small, but I don't mind that.

COOKIE

Yeah, hobbits don't take up much space.

MEL

Oh, ha ha. I like that if the toilet blows up, it's somebody else's problem.

LEO

Is that Mel?

COOKIE

Yup.

LEO

Give her my love.

COOKIE

Give it yourself.

Leo pops his head into the screen upside down.

LEO

Hey, Mel.

MEL

Hey, Leo.

LEO

Holding down the fort?

MEL

To the best of my ability.

LEO

Carry on, soldier.

Leo exits the screen with the laundry basket.

COOKIE

How's the book tour?

MEL

Huh. Such as it is. I haven't agreed to any in-person events, owing to the fact that I would be expected to say things out loud in front of people. But Sarah's been getting me lots of print interviews and podcasts and such.

COOKIE

Why don't you want to do in-person? People love to see their favorite authors.

MEL

Because I don't think anyone would buy my books if they thought they were written by Pippi Longstocking.

COOKIE

Shut up. Nancy Drew, maybe. How is the sequel coming along?

MEL

Done. Already submitted it.

COOKIE

Awesome.

(beat)

Have you talked to Henry, lately?

MEL

No. Why? It's been a year. I'm sure he's moved on by now.

COOKIE

He sent me a birthday card.

MEL

Really?

COOKIE

I know. Who does that? Who sends cards in the mail anymore?

MEL

Like somebody's grandpa. Did he include a five dollar bill?

COOKIE
Anyway, I called him.

MEL
You what?

COOKIE
It was a really nice card. He said
he was following us on Instagram.

MEL
Oh.

COOKIE
Anyway , you're right. He has moved
on. He's... getting married.

MEL
(beat)
Who's he marrying?

COOKIE
Trisha.

MEL
Hmm. That figures.

COOKIE
He wanted to know if he should send
you an invite.

MEL
Nah. I mean, I'm happy for him. For
both of them. I truly am. But I'm
sure they don't need me there.

A DOORBELL is heard from Cookie's end.

COOKIE
Oh, jeez. I'd better go.

MEL
Love you.

COOKIE
No you.

He disconnects. Mel sets down her phone, reaches under her pillow and pulls out the corner of a T-shirt Henry wore. She pulls it all the way out, smooths it out on her lap, then covers her face with it.

INT. MEL'S APODMENT - DAY

September. Mel sits at her kitchen table/desk, a piece of toast in her mouth, tapping away at her computer. Her phone RINGS.

MEL
Mel Sheridan.

LILY (O.S.)
Mel? It's Lily Ryland.

MEL
Oh.

Mel drops the toast and brushes down her shirt, as if Lily can see her.

MEL (CONT'D)
How are you?

LILY (O.S.)
Fine. We were going to take the boat out one more time for the season. We were wondering if you'd like to join us? We'd love to see you.

MEL
Oh, Lily. I would love to see you and Perry too, but you know Henry and I broke up. We haven't talked in a while. I would have thought he might've told you.

LILY (O.S.)
Actually, Henry asked me to invite you. He thought you wouldn't say no if I asked.

MEL
That sounds like Henry.

LILY (O.S.)
He's doing better. He wants to see you.

MEL
Will Trisha be coming?

LILY (O.S.)
No, I believe they're taking a little break.

MEL

I don't know if it's a good idea.

LILY (O.S.)

Look, I don't think he's trying to get back together with you. I just think he misses you. He'll come by and pick you up. Just text me your address.

INT. MEL'S APODMENT - DAY

Henry shows up at Mel's door armed with lattes. Mel smiles, then bursts into tears. He hugs her, still holding the hot drinks. Her tears turn to laughter.

MEL

How are things with Trisha? Lily said you two were taking a break?

HENRY

Just from the wedding. Her dad is...

(blowing out air)

... And my dad. Let's just say Mr. Gregson's more right-wing than the Koch brothers. Put together. We thought it would be a good idea if they didn't have to be in the same room for a while.

MEL

It's not like you're marrying your father-in-law.

HENRY

No, but he would be my kid's grandfather.

MEL

Henry, I need to tell you something. I only found out I was pregnant the day we had that fight. And I was going to tell you. I thought I had time. Now I wish you never knew at all.

HENRY

Hold up. That's all in the past now.

MEL

Right.

(beat)

Is it okay if I say I've missed you? I'm so sorry about the way it ended. I hate the way we left things?

HENRY

Me, too, but let's let the past stay in the past. We're friends, now. That's good.

MEL

I was stupid and thoughtless, I should've...

HENRY

I declare the topic off limits. This is our fresh start, okay?

MEL

Okay.

EXT. PERRY'S BOAT - BUDD INLET - CONTINUOUS

Henry and Perry are on the bridge of *Carolyn's Ramble*, talking. Lily and Mel are seated in the stern, enjoying the view of gently rising forested hills and Mount Rainier in the distance. It is a spectacular fall day.

LILY

How was the drive down?

MEL

Good. I've missed him. So good to be able to talk to him again.

LILY

You know, Mel, I had two miscarriages.

MEL

Really?

LILY

One at six weeks, one at twelve. I know how hard it was for you.

MEL

Did you have other children?

LILY

No. I got my tubes tied. I never wanted to go through that again. I thought about calling you, but I didn't know if it would be welcome. I hope you had someone to talk to.

MEL

Cookie. And I did go to therapy for a while... Was it hard for Henry?

LILY

Yeah.

MEL

I didn't think he'd ever forgive me.

LILY

Oh, no, Mel. Don't think that. It wasn't your fault.

MEL

Maybe. But I did kinda dump it on him and walked out.

LILY

Most people don't know what to say. I'm sure he didn't mean to suggest losing your baby was something you could just get over and move on.

MEL

It's not that. I'm no good at relationships. It's like walking over wet paint for me.

LILY

What do you mean?

MEL

You know... paint yourself into a corner, the only way out is to walk over wet paint and ruin everything. That's me. I just didn't want to keep putting him through it. I couldn't.

They sit in silence for a bit. Mel notices Perry put his arm on Henry's shoulder. Henry shakes it off, then they hug.

MEL (CONT'D)

Is something going on?

LILY

Ah, that. I have to confess something. Perry and I had ulterior motives asking you down here.

MEL

What?

LILY

Perry has a brain tumor.

MEL

Oh no.

LILY

We found out when we were in Egypt. He had a seizure, so the doctors did an MRI and found it.

MEL

Has he seen a doctor since he's been back? Is there anything they can do?

LILY

Oh, you know. Surgery, chemotherapy.

Lily covers Mel's hands with her own.

LILY (CONT'D)

Don't tell Henry, but it doesn't look good. Perry is leaning toward not fighting the disease.

MEL

How do you feel about that?

Lily turns toward the water, allowing a few tears to fall.

LILY

I'm... I'll support him either way. I understand why. His doctor says there's a good chance he'll come out of the surgery with brain damage. His mind, his creativity, that's what he lives for. He doesn't want to face a future without it.

MEL

I'm so sorry. You know you can call on me if you need anything, Lily.

(MORE)

MEL (CONT'D)

Even if it's just to scream your head off at the unfairness of it all.

INT. HENRY'S CAR - TRAVELING UP 1-5 - CONTINUOUS

Neither Henry nor Mel speak. He stares straight ahead, hands gripping the wheel at ten and two. Henry's phone RINGS.

HENRY

Yes, thank you for calling me back. When are you going to schedule the biopsy?... What?

Henry pulls the car off to the shoulder.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Goddamn it.

Henry slams the steering wheel.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Talk him out of it!

He gets out of the car and angrily paces alongside the road.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I will... I will, but you have to back me up.

He disconnects and throws the phone into the scotch broom along the road. Mel gets out of the car.

MEL

What happened?

HENRY

My dad is refusing treatment. I have to go back down there.

MEL

Just a sec.

Mel dials Henry's phone, fishes it out of the vegetation.

INT. PERRY'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Lily opens the door.

HENRY

Why didn't you tell me he had a biopsy?

Without waiting for an answer, he pushes past Lily to Perry inside the apartment. Lily and Mel share a look and hang back in the foyer.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Dad, I just got off the phone with your doctor. You have to have the surgery.

PERRY

I was going to talk to you about this. I just thought it would be easier if you talked the details over with my doctor first.

HENRY

What are you thinking? There are treatments that can help you. This isn't a death sentence, but you have to take care of this now.

PERRY

I've had time to think about it, Henry. This is what I want.

Henry follows Perry into the sitting room.

HENRY

You can't just give up, Dad. If you don't like this doctor, then let's go to someone else. A good neurosurgeon can get the tumor out and you can go on living your life with very little chance of recurrence.

PERRY

With a thirty to fifty percent chance of brain damage. Then the debilitating effects of chemotherapy.

HENRY

There are ways to mitigate those effects, Dad. Drugs, physical therapy. And don't get hung up on statistics. They're not predictors. Let me take you for a second opinion, please.

Perry rubs his forehead and sits wearily.

PERRY

The surgery's not a sure thing. It may not even eliminate my symptoms. And the chemo will make it so I can't work, don't you see? I need a clear head. Without it... if it's a choice between twelve to eighteen months of misery and infirmity, or three months to enjoy my time with you...

Perry looks to Mel for understanding.

PERRY (CONT'D)

Mel, knowing what you know now, how would you have advised your mother?

Mel steps into the room.

MEL

Honestly?

Mel glances at Henry, then returns to Perry.

MEL (CONT'D)

I would've said it wasn't worth it.

HENRY

Unbelievable.

Henry leaves, SLAMMING the door.

MEL

Sorry. He's just upset.

PERRY

Of course, he is. This isn't his way. I'm afraid I don't share his absolute faith in medicine.

LILY

We've had a lot of time to think about what's best to do. I'm sure Henry will understand once he gets used to the idea.

MEL

I'll help you in any way I can.

PERRY

Lily and I can manage. Henry's the one who'll need your help. Hey, didn't you two drive down here together?

Mel looks out the window where Henry's car peels out of the parking lot.

MEL

Yup. Oh well. Not to worry. I'm sure there's a bus.

PERRY

Take my car.

MEL

I couldn't do that.

PERRY

If you plan to be at my beck and call day and night, the least I can do is provide you with wheels.

Perry hands Mel his car keys.

PERRY (CONT'D)

Anyway, they won't let me drive anymore.

INT. HENRY'S CONDO - CONTINUOUS

10:00 PM. Henry answers the door, shirtless, with the top two buttons of his jeans unbuttoned. He doesn't look happy to see Mel.

MEL

You're not alone?

He shakes his head.

MEL (CONT'D)

It's okay. I'll talk to you tomorrow.

HENRY

Nah, come on in. She's 'sleep anyway.

He slouches in a chair with a wet cloth over his face. Mel sits on the floor in front of him, her hands on his knees.

MEL

You know, a wise person once told me it sucks to be the one who doesn't get to make the decisions.

He waves a bottle of vodka at her.

HENRY

You wanna drink?

(burps)

I 'ready drank all the scotch.

MEL

I'm sorry I didn't back you up. I should have kept my mouth shut.

HENRY

No. You tol' the truth. Don' 'pologize for that. He dun' trust me. He din' see someone at Wellstone 'cause he din' want me involved in the decision.

MEL

He does trust you. He just knew how hard this would be for you. What happens now?

HENRY

Hospice.

MEL

How long does he have?

HENRY

'Thout surgery? One to three---

Henry slams his hand down on the arm of the chair and sobs. Mel sits on the arm of the chair, holds him and lets him cry.

MEL

Henry, I'm so sorry. Let me help. I owe you that. I owe you so much more than that. I'll make sure your dad and Lily have everything they need. You won't have to worry about anything, except spending time with him while you can.

Henry calms down somewhat.

HENRY

How can he jus' give up hope? I don' understand that.

MEL

He doesn't want to die, Henry. He just wants to live on his own terms.

HENRY

Hey, sorry I left you there. How
d'jou get back?

MEL

Your dad gave me his keys.

HENRY

Huh.

MEL

Listen, I'd better go before Trisha
gets up for a drink of water. I'll
talk to you in the morning, okay?

He walks her to the door and they embrace.

MEL (CONT'D)

Anything you want. Anything you
need.

Henry leans down as if to kiss her.

HENRY

You know what I want.

Mel pulls away gently.

MEL

See you tomorrow.

INT. PERRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Henry hugs Lily at the door, then hugs his dad. Neither one
can speak. Henry and Perry sit on the couch, Lily and Mel
stay in the doorway. Perry puts his arm around Henry's
shoulder and lets him cry.

MONTAGE:

The four of them on the boat.

Coming out of a movie theater.

Playing board games. Mel gets bossy when Lily tries to clear
the table.

Walking along the waterfront. Mel hangs back and watches the
other three. As the montage progresses, the weather gets
colder.

INT. PERRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Perry and Henry are sitting on the couch. Perry is dozing. Mel is in a chair with her laptop.

HENRY

What's that?

MEL

Just a writer's conference. In July in Vancouver.

HENRY

You going?

MEL

I don't know. Thinking about it.

HENRY

You should totally go. You're a big time author now.

MEL

Shut up. I won't know anyone. I hate talking to strangers.

HENRY

But you'd be talking about something you love.

Mel shrugs.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I'll go with you.

MEL

What would you do there?

HENRY

Be your secretary. Follow you around and take notes. I take excellent notes.

Mel takes Henry's hand. Henry's phone RINGS. He rises to take it.

MEL

Except no one can read your writing.

HENRY

(into the phone)

Hey. How are you? ... About the same.

INT. PERRY'S CONDO - STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Henry continues his call.

TRISHA (O.S.)

I miss you so much. When are you coming home? Everybody at work misses you.

HENRY

I don't know. Why don't you come down? For a couple of days, or as long as you want?

TRISHA (O.S.)

(beat)

Where does she sleep?

HENRY

Who? Mel? I told you. We took an apartment in Dad's building, just short term.

TRISHA (O.S.)

So what, would I be, like, sleeping on the couch?

(beat)

She's trying to get you back.

HENRY

No, she isn't. We're friends. That's all it is.

TRISHA (O.S.)

How convenient she swoops in to save the day when your dad gets sick?

HENRY

It's not like that. She knew them from before. They were close.

TRISHA (O.S.)

And how was I supposed to get to know him when he was always gone? How could you let her back into your life, after all she did to you?

HENRY

Come on, Trish. There's nothing going on with her. Why do I have to keep explaining myself to you?

TRISHA (O.S.)

Because I know what you're like with her. You mooned over her for months when she wouldn't give you the time of day. I know how much that hurt you.

HENRY

And we tried it together, it didn't work. We both know that now.

TRISHA (O.S.)

So when we get married, she'll just keep hanging around?

HENRY

(beat)

Aw, sweetheart. Look, can't you come down for a few days? We can get a hotel. It's just so hard right now. I don't like doing this on the phone.

TRISHA (O.S.)

Doing what? Breaking up?

(beat)

Go to hell.

Trisha disconnects.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Henry is sitting on the step. Lily comes up with groceries.

LILY

What's the matter? Did something happen?

HENRY

Wedding's off. For good this time.

Lily sits next to him.

LILY

I'm so sorry. Was it something to do with Mel?

HENRY

No, I've just screwed up so bad.
(shakes his head)
I was in love with Mel long before we got together, did I tell you that? Her mom was still alive.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

I didn't really think I had a chance. Then, when it happened, I couldn't believe my luck. I guess I pushed her. Don't know what the hell the hurry was. Then I guess I got mad, or scared. Who knows? I walked out. Ran out.

LILY

Why don't you talk to her?

HENRY

I can't. I went straight to Trisha, which Mel predicted I would. I didn't do it to hurt her. I just didn't think I could go back to the way I used to be. Figured maybe I should get married. I mean, I do love Trisha. Not like I loved Mel, but I thought we could make it work. Stupid.

LILY

If you and Mel got back together, would you do things differently?

HENRY

Yeah. I wouldn't run away.

LILY

Why not tell her that?

HENRY

I hurt her. I hurt them both. I didn't mean to. But why would she trust me now?

He gets up.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I guess I'm going to take a walk.

INT. PERRY'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Perry is awake on the couch, looking at some papers Mel has given him.

PERRY

This one. It's perfect. Where did you ever find it?

Mel smiles, pleased that he chose that one.

MEL

A local guy. He lived in my neighborhood. He died young, though. Eighteen.

PERRY

No kidding.

MEL

I never met him, but Mom did. This one was her favorite. She had it on the wall in her bedroom all my life.

PERRY

Incredible. I mean, this poem, this is how I've lived every day of my life.

Mel takes the paper.

MEL

I guess I was about twelve when it really started to make sense to me. I could grasp the meaning. Henry probably told you I had health problems when I was a kid. That really sets you apart from your peers, right at the time when all you want is to be like everyone else.

She studies the poem.

MEL (CONT'D)

But this poem made me fight against that. I thought, no, I'm going to be who I want to be. I'll dress the way I want, and if people think I'm weird, so be it. I wasn't afraid of anything.

PERRY

You and I are so alike.

Mel gives him back the poem.

MEL

Oh no. No, no. That was a long time ago. I forgot all about that twelve year-old girl.

PERRY

This is your reminder, then. Now
you'll never forget your courage.

He hands Mel back the poem. She folds it, as Lily comes in
with the groceries.

MEL

Hmm.

INT. MEL AND HENRY'S STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mel is seated in the tiny kitchenette, reading. Henry comes
in. His eyes are red. Mel goes to him.

MEL

Are you okay?

He shrugs and nods.

MEL (CONT'D)

You wanna talk?

HENRY

Nah. I think I'll just get some
sleep... Maybe later.

MEL

Anytime.

She hugs him. Henry squeezes his eyes tight. He gently pulls
away.

HENRY

Night.

Mel returns to her book. She pulls the folded poem out of the
back and reads it.

MEL

(whispers)

*That sadness could exist, I have no
qualm/And triumph over man to his
despair.*

A teardrop falls on the page. Mel rubs it off with the heel
of her hand.

EXT. OLYMPIA - UNDEVELOPED HILLSIDE - DAY

Perry and Henry look down at a hillside that levels out with a view of Budd Inlet. It's fenced, with a small animal shed. Wandering the property is a flock of goats.

HENRY

You farming goats, now, Dad?

PERRY

No. They're hired, to keep the blackberries at bay. The shepherd brings them in periodically. All I had to do was fence it and put up a shed. Let's go down.

HENRY

You sure?

PERRY

If we take it slow.

EXT. OLYMPIA - UNDEVELOPED PROPERTY - CONTINUOUS

Henry supports Perry by the arm as they arrive at the bottom of the hill. A friendly goat approaches them.

PERRY

I call that one 'Misty.' She's a sweet old girl. She's had lots of babies over the years.

HENRY

You've known her a while.

Perry rubs behind Misty's ears.

PERRY

We're old friends.

HENRY

Never knew goats had blue eyes. So what is this place?

Perry takes out a folded paper.

PERRY

A park. Or it will be. I bought this piece of land several years ago. I created the design, but you know, one thing and another, I never got around to finishing it.

(MORE)

PERRY (CONT'D)

We got the permit, and Lily is going to finish it for me. Construction won't begin until early spring.

Perry points out some of the park's features, as half-grown goats frolic on the hillside. Old gals lay and chew their cud.

PERRY (CONT'D)

On the south side, along that ridge, there will be a perpetual fountain. It's based on a design we saw in Hawaii. As the water flowed down, it resonated with the metal, and produced a hum. Like a ghostly marimba. That's what I want.

Perry folds the diagram.

PERRY (CONT'D)

The project will be completed in late summer. We're sending invitations out to all our friends, all over the world. Now, so they have plenty of time to plan. I want them all to come here and have a party.

Perry stretches his arms out.

PERRY (CONT'D)

The park will be called *Il Stretta*, Italian for 'embrace.' That's how this place makes me feel. Like the hillside holds me here. I want all my friends to come here and feel that.

HENRY

Sounds great, Dad.

PERRY

Lily knows what to do, but I hope you'll help her.

HENRY

Of course.

PERRY

And Mel, too.

HENRY

Yeah. 'Course.

PERRY

Don't lose her again.

HENRY

That's over, Dad. I blew it.

PERRY

Oh, Henry. This is my fault.

HENRY

What?

Perry sits on a log.

PERRY

You've always thought the best of me, and I love you for that. But it's not like I've never screwed up. I almost lost Lily, you know. She said something that gave me a good deal of heartache. She said, 'Being alone doesn't mean you're tough. Fighting for the one you love, fighting to make it work, that takes guts.'

Henry sits next to his dad.

HENRY

I assume you didn't offer to marry someone else in the interim.

PERRY

I've screwed up plenty. Look, I don't know if Mel is 'the one.' How would I know that? I just don't want you to make the same mistakes I did. Wandering through your life looking for the easy thing, What I have with Lily, I didn't have that with your mom.

Perry puts his arm around Henry.

PERRY (CONT'D)

Don't get me wrong, she was great. But we were young. We were busy. We weren't even together five years. Seems like five minutes to me now. We barely had a chance to get on each other's nerves. Lily challenges me. We challenge each other. And that's exciting.

HENRY

Mel wants us to be friends. That's how we started out, but I don't know. I can't promise anything.

PERRY

I'm not asking you to promise anything. Except that you're going to buy a house.

HENRY

Yes, I will.

PERRY SHAW

Okay.

Perry puts a hand to his temple.

HENRY

Are you getting tired? Should we go up?

Perry takes a long look at the hillside and the water, as if to memorize it all, then nods.

EXT. OLYMPIA - PERRY'S PARK - DAY

The park is completely landscaped. The fountain gurgles, with a faint metallic hum. Dozens of guests gather at all levels. A Fleetwood Mac cover band plays music on a platform at the base of the hill. Henry and Mel arrive and hug Lily.

LILY

I haven't had a chance to catch up with you two. How's the house hunting coming along?

MEL

Oh, Lily please, say something to put a fire under him. He's seen about fifty houses--

HENRY

--She's exaggerating.

MEL

And if he kind of likes one, he'll dither and dawdle and someone else buys it. You gotta tell him to poop or get off the pot.

LILY

Well, Henry, what is it you want?

HENRY

I'll know it when I see it. I want it to be a home. I never did inherit Dad's wanderlust. I like to be home.

MEL

By that he means my place. He's never at his own condo.

HENRY

That's just semantics.

MEL

I'm trying to get him interested in this cute little townhouse down by the water. Close to his work, everything's brand new, and it has a view of Elliott Bay.

HENRY

It has two ovens. And the two bedrooms are each no bigger than a refrigerator.

MEL

So? What do you need room for? You're just going to sleep in there.

Henry looks at her sideways.

MEL (CONT'D)

Okay, but you don't need room for that.

HENRY

And there are no trees to climb. Somebody like a chef should live there. If Mel's old house was for sale, I'd take that one in a minute.

MEL

Much too big. Too much maintenance. And I can attest to the leaky roof and funky plumbing. You need to get something shiny and new.

HENRY

Lily, I wish you could see this turn-of-the-century Tudor we looked at; three stories, on Capital Hill. All original woodwork inside.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

The polished oak paneling, the carved banister, the moldings, it's classic.

MEL

It's the kind of place my mom called 'woman killers,' because they were so hard to keep up.

HENRY

But it was charming. That fireplace? And the picture window, with real leaded glass? The beams on the ceiling? Gorgeous.

MEL

It's a big, drafty, run-down dump. It's much too big and impractical.

HENRY

Hmm. Sucks to be the one who doesn't get to make the decisions.

Mel growls. She notices that Cookie and Leo have arrived, so she runs to greet them. Mel shows something to Cookie, who jumps up and down.

LILY

How's she doing?

HENRY

As you see, feisty as ever.

LILY

But still just friends, though?

HENRY

You know Mel... she's restless.

LILY

What are you going to do if she meets someone else?

HENRY

I don't know. She doesn't want me, not like that. She insists we see other people. In fact, she gets on my case if I'm not dating. I ask women out, but nothing comes of it.

LILY

Because you don't want it to.

Henry shrugs.

HENRY

She wants to be friends. I want that, too. I'm not going to do anything to jeopardize that.

LILY

What are you going to do?

Henry puts his arm around her shoulders.

HENRY

I'm gonna buy a house.

Lily waves to the band that it's time for the announcement. Lily and Henry join Mel on the platform as the guests gather around.

LILY

Welcome everyone, thank you so much for coming. I wanted to introduce the artist who made our fountain, Ken Maheloma.

The guests applaud, and KEN (49) steps up on the stage.

KEN

Thanks, Lily. I was thrilled to be asked to take part in this project, to honor my good friend, Perry. I hope he's happy up there seeing how it all turned out.

Ken hands a plaque to Lily, who in turn, hands it to Henry.

LILY

Will you read it?

HENRY

Okay. It says *'Il Stretta*, In loving memory of Perry Michael Shaw.' And there's a poem: *That sadness could exist, I have no qualm/ And triumph over man to his despair./ I clench life--*
(his voice breaks)
I can't.

MEL

I clench life in my fists and scorn the balm/ That caution by deception seems to share.

Mel closes her eyes and recites from memory.

MEL (CONT'D)

*To sip is too insipid. Draughts of
wine/ Burst gladly on my tongue and
spray my throat/ With stinging
madness. Better it be mine/ To
suffer, if in suffering I can
gloat/ For having torn this time
from jealous death./ I shall
rejoice that I have not succumbed/
And only bow to sorrow out of
choice./ My cry shall speed from my
uplifted voice./ I have endured and
joyed. I am not numbed./ I feel
more deeply with each glorious
breath.*

As the gathered guests applaud, Henry, Mel and Lily hug. Mel pulls Henry down off the platform and the music starts up again.

MEL (CONT'D)

Wanna dance?

HENRY

In public?

The sun has set now, the park lit up with torches. Mel and Henry don't dance so much as rock back and forth.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I assume it was you who found that poem.

MEL

He liked it. I learned so much from your dad. He inspired me. How he trusted his instincts. Went for it. Just like you.

HENRY

Does it get any easier?

MEL

Not really.

(she stops)

I... have something for you.

HENRY

Oh? What's the occasion?

MEL

It's not a birthday present, cause you know I don't do that.

HENRY

Okay?

MEL

The thing is, you can't say anything, and you can't do anything.

HENRY

What's going on?

MEL

You'll understand when I give it to you. Do you promise?

HENRY

Is it a pony? Is it a puppy?

MEL

Those are my terms. Do you accept?

HENRY

I'm definitely curious. Okay, not a word.

Mel takes a gold ring from her pocket and shows it to Henry. He is speechless.

MEL

I don't want you to say anything.

She deliberately places the ring on his right-hand ring finger.

MEL (CONT'D)

That thing that we were never going to talk about... someday, if you want, we could talk about it. But not now. Now is just for you to think. But Henry, no matter what you decide, you will never again lost my friendship.

Before he has a chance to respond, she pulls him by the hand.

MEL (CONT'D)

Let's get something to eat.

Henry follows, making a fist with his right hand, as if he fears the ring will disappear.

INT. MEL'S APODMENT - DAY

Mel is dressed to leave. There is a suitcase near the door with a brochure saying, "Write On! Writer's Conference." She checks her phone for messages, then checks for emails on her laptop. Disappointed, she closes the computer and puts it in her suitcase.

She opens her front door, to find Henry standing there, one hand raised to knock. Mel's mouth drops.

HENRY

What? I said I was taking you.

INT. HENRY'S CAR - TRAVELING DOWN 1-5 - CONTINUOUS

Mel is far too nervous to chat, so she turns on the radio. Henry still wears the ring on his right hand.

INT. VANCOUVER - HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Henry has his feet up on the bed, reading the conference brochure. Mel comes out of the bathroom wearing the black dress from their big date on her birthday.

HENRY

Why didn't you tell me you were the keyno-- You're wearing the... you're wearing it. I can't believe you kept it.

MEL

Considering it's worth more than the rest of my wardrobe put together, I thought I should hang onto it.

HENRY

You're... planning to get up in front of a couple hundred adoring fans, in that dress, and talk about writing?

MEL

I figured this way, if they ever saw me on the street, they wouldn't recognize me.

HENRY

Good plan.

He approaches her. She doesn't blink.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I guess if you're gonna to reveal to the world that Mel Sheridan isn't a man, this is one way to do it.

MEL

Actually, my cover was already blown. Somehow it got out on melsheridan.com, so now everyone knows. That's the only reason I agreed to do this speech. Why didn't I think to use a pen name?

He bites his lip and runs a finger under the halter neck strap, sliding down to the side of her breast.

HENRY

So, when's the speech?

Mel arches her eyebrow.

MEL

About an hour.

The silky black fabric pools and ripples around Mel's feet. Her feet disappear from view.

INT. VANCOUVER - HOTEL BANQUET ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Henry holds tight to Mel's hand as they enter the ballroom.

MEL

It's amazing how a little bit of fabric can be such an aphrodisiac.

HENRY

It had nothing to do with the fabric.

A flustered conference volunteer commandeers Mel and takes her to the stage. She mouths, 'gah' to Henry. She is introduced and walks out onto the stage to a palpable wall of SOUND. She swallows hard and begins.

MEL

Thank you, Fred, for that very warm introduction. And thank you for not introducing me as Mr. Mel Sheridan.

This produces an even bigger response from the audience. She curtsies with a flourish.

MEL (CONT'D)

My best friend once asked me why I wanted to be a writer. I told him that all my life, I've had stories in my head. Characters, voices. Daydreams, really, but with a beginning, a middle, and an end. At some point, I had to decide if I was crazy, or I was a writer.

The audience laughs.

MEL (CONT'D)

To which he responded, 'Or both.'

Laughter and applause from the audience.

MEL (CONT'D)

And he was right. I think all writers are at least a little bit crazy...

INT. VANCOUVER - HOTEL BAR - CONTINUOUS

Henry and Mel run into the bar, hand in hand, like they're skipping school. They order drinks.

HENRY

Why didn't you tell me you were going to be the keynote speaker?

MEL

You know why. You would've gotten excited and that would only have made me more nervous than I already was. I figured the only way I was going to manage it was if I didn't prepare, but just got up and talked about writing for a little while. You would probably have had me go up with a bunch of three by fives, or worse, a power point presentation.

HENRY

Well, you were brilliant, however you managed it. I'm proud of you.

MEL

I'll drink to that.

They down their drinks and order another round. Henry looks down at his empty glass.

HENRY

So...

Mel practically leaps off the stool.

MEL

Just a sec.

She quickly takes herself off to the bathroom. Henry removes a ring from his pocket, a gold band embedded with diamonds. He nervously rubs his face.

INT. VANCOUVER - HOTEL LADIES' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mel paces, flapping her hands nervously. She stops and points at herself in the mirror.

MEL

You see? This is what comes from
clenching life in your fists...

INT. VANCOUVER - HOTEL BAR - CONTINUOUS

Henry turns the ring around in his fingers. He sees Mel approach out of the corner of his eye. In a panic, he drops the ring into her drink.

Mel returns to her stool, radiating how relaxed she feels, a picture of perfect calm, not a worry in this world. She freezes when she sees the ring.

HENRY

So, I bought the house.

MEL

The Tudor?

HENRY

Uh huh.

MEL

Henry. What are you going to do
with three thousand square feet?

HENRY

Thirty-two hundred, actually. I was
hoping you might help me with that.

Her gaze returns to the amber liquid in front of her.

MEL

So you thought you'd warm me up
with sex, did you?

HENRY

No! I didn't know you were going to
wear that dress. The sex was a
bonus. No, I just did what you
asked me to do. I thought about...
what we were going to talk about.
This is my counter-proposal to
your... whatever that was.

He pushes her drink closer to her with his finger.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I want it to stick.

Mel does not drink.

MEL

Are you sure I can make you happy?

HENRY

Let me put it this way, you're
spectacularly bad at making me
unhappy.

MEL

You know you scare me... always
have.

HENRY

I scare you?

MEL

Your confidence. Your unflinching
belief that everything's going to
be all right.

HENRY

I guess I just want what I want.
So... what do you want?

MEL

To be happy.

HENRY

What would make you happy?

MEL

To have you with me always.

HENRY

Progress. Except, you already have that, even if the answer's no... Aren't you going to finish that drink?

Mel lets the ice cubes jiggle in the glass, but doesn't drink.

MEL

You know, Lily says it's just a piece of paper.

HENRY

I love Lily, but I don't want to marry her. I want to marry you. Paper and all.

Henry downs Mel's drink. Gasping, he pulls the ring out of his mouth and sets it on the bar in front of her.

HENRY (CONT'D)

So, what do you want?

With her two index fingers, she turns the ring back and forth like a steering wheel. This way? That way? She pushes the ring away.

MEL

You don't know what I'm like. You think you do, but you don't. Not really.

She blows out a breath.

MEL (CONT'D)

I'm a coward.

Mel takes the ring off Henry's hand.

MEL (CONT'D)

I'm a low-down, lily-livered craven coward. You don't know that when I loved you--

Henry reacts with panic.

MEL (CONT'D)

--I sabotaged us. Because I guess I can't be loved. And because I thought you deserved better.

Henry leans over the bar, head sunk between his shoulders.

MEL (CONT'D)

But... I want to think that I can change. I want to think that maybe someday I could deserve you. What I want... what I want most of all is to be able to tell the whole world that you are my husband.

She pushes his ring onto his left-hand ring finger.

MEL (CONT'D)

And lover. And friend. And muse.
And dirty old man. So, if it's not too late, that's what I want.

HENRY

Can I ask you a question?

She rocks her head back and forth, as he puts her ring on her left-hand ring finger. He tips up her chin and looks in her eyes. She returns his scared but hopeful look.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Can we get a puppy?

They laugh, they hug, they kiss.

THE END