Edith

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Edith

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of New Orleans in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts in Film, Theatre and Communication Arts Creative Writing

by

Henry Griffin

B.A. Loyola University, 1992

May, 2013
Acknowledgements

A terminal degree such as an MFA suggests an accounting of all the people who have helped me become a writer. An abbreviated list must begin with my parents, William and Emilie Griffin, writers both, who have authored thirty books between them. They forced me to read, inspired me to write, even when my obsession with movies led me away from their literary concentration.

Robert Fecas, my high school theology teacher, offered extra credit for anyone who would go to Loyola's Film Buffs Institute on a weeknight to see a French film that turned out to be Rene Clement’s *Forbidden Games*. Though I was already a film obsessive from a young age, this screening diverted my attention from Spielberg and Hitchcock toward a spectrum of storytelling that completed my worldview. It is likely that the many nights I spent at FBI (instead of doing my high school homework) led to my attending Loyola in 1987.

Special mention must be made of my film professor Andrew Horton, who came to Loyola after teaching screenwriting at UNO. While I never studied screenwriting with him (or anyone else), his Modern European Film and Literature course turned me onto Bunuel, Bresson, and Kusturica. My best writing teacher was Fr. Raymond Schroth, S.J.. His tutelage in the ways of Strunk, White and Zinsser prepared me for a career in journalism. However, I found that the rigors of reportage lent themselves equally to dramatic writing, and I entered the world of screenwriting with an editor’s predilection toward tireless revision.

I wrote my first screenplay alone, and quickly sold it, thanks to my representation of seventeen years: Rick Berg, once my agent, now my manager, and John Sloss, my attorney. My work as screenwriter and script doctor for various studios led me to several on-the-job mentors: Gore Verbinski, director of my first studio picture, *Mouse Hunt*; Walter Parkes & Laurie MacDonald, the creative heads of DreamWorks at the time of my employment; Stuart Cornfeld, the producer at Red Hour Films who worked with me for a year on a remake of *The Hot Rock*.

In the course of my MFA experience at UNO, I have found myself a student of my colleagues, who have served ably as mentors: Amanda Boyden, the fiction writer who is a currently working screenwriter; Joanna Leake, the former CWW chair who has now read nine of my screenplays; and particularly current chair Rick Barton, who has read each of those nine, and also taken personal interest in my achievement of this Master’s degree. His support during this process can not be underestimated. That the character of Edith shares a job title with all three of my committee members was a welcome coincidence, but one that lent the defense process an added usefulness, one that will aid the screenplay toward its ultimate goal of production.
INT. COFFEE SHOP - 1971 - NIGHT


NANCY MISNER (23) is lost in a copy of *Moby Dick* as the window facing the street in front of her is sheeted with rain.

She looks up to see that, while she has been reading, a flood is rising. There seems to be no leaving.

She turns to face the proprietor of the bohemian cafe, ALAN BARRACLOUGH (25), who points to the television on the counter, an old black-and-white.

Nash Roberts, a 70’s weatherman, is using markers and posterboard to illustrate Hurricane Edith, a storm bearing in on Southern Louisiana.

She looks back outside: her car isn’t going anywhere.

She looks back at Alan, whose expression reads: I’m not going anywhere either.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - 1971 - NIGHT - LATER

They share a bottle of wine, laughing as the lights go out.

INT. WOODEN STAIRWELL - NIGHT - LATER

Using his flashlight, he leads her up a flight of stairs to his apartment.

INT. ALAN’S APARTMENT - NIGHT - LATER

He lights a candle, which illuminates both of their smiling faces. They are having fun.

He moves to the kitchen, to refill their glasses until he sees her shadow flickering on the wall in front of him.

She stands in front of the light, dropping her jacket on the bed. She is disrobing.

He watches as she unzips her dress.

They embrace.

Candlelight projects the pair coupling as they roll across the bed and onto the floor.
INT. APARTMENT - 1971 - DAY

Nancy, months later, exits the bathroom to nod to her boyfriend Alan: yes, she’s pregnant.

Alan, in response, produces a ring box and drops to his knees: will you?

She screams: yes.

INT. MATERNITY WARD - 1972 - DAY

A gaggle of nurses laugh as they trade and pretend to smoke some pink cigars: IT’S A GIRL!

Alan karate kicks in the hallway: he’s a new dad.

INT. INCUBATOR - DAY

An hours-old baby girl is lowered into a crib. A prominent tag at the head of the crib reads the girl’s name: EDITH.

FADE TO BLACK (though the name stays long enough to become the film’s title.

END MUSIC.

CREDITS OVER:

EDITH
...and that’s how I got my name.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - 2013 - NIGHT

EDITH BARRACLOUGH (39) looks expectantly across a romantic dinner table at MARCUS PYNCHON (42, African-American, a little heavy, bookish).

EDITH
So, how about you?

MARCUS
Marcus is my grandfather’s name.

EDITH
And what was he like?
MARCUS
I never knew him. He died when I was really young. He was a butcher, I think?

EDITH
Oh. How did your parents meet?

MARCUS
I don’t know.

EDITH
You don’t know?

MARCUS
I mean, mutual friends, I think.

Now she’s quizzing him.

EDITH
How long did they date before they were married?

MARCUS
I don’t know, a year?

EDITH
When’s their wedding anniversary?

MARCUS
August something. They got divorced when I was four.

EDITH
I’m sorry.

MARCUS
I’m not. I mean, I have no real memory of their marriage. No basis for comparison. Double birthday, double Christmas, whatever.

EDITH
Have you ever been married?

MARCUS
God, no.

Edith’s eyes reveal that this was the wrong answer.

EDITH
Not in the cards for you?
MARCUS
Never met the right woman.

EDITH
And what are you looking for?

MARCUS

Edith suppresses a frown.

EDITH
She has to be Black? You wouldn’t date a woman outside your race?

MARCUS
I would, of course. But I’m an African-American lit scholar. A mixed marriage wouldn’t look great.

EDITH
If you’re hung up on appearances, no.

MARCUS
Did you think this was a date?

This catches Edith off guard. She did.

EDITH
(laughing it off)
No, of course not.

An awkward silence.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT – NIGHT

Edith walking back to her car, alone, talking to herself (as is her habit).

EDITH
Did I think this was a date? No, I assumed you were taking me out to dinner ironically.

INT. EDITH’S CAR – NIGHT

She continues her monologue on her drive home.
EDITH
No, Marcus. When you showed up in that tie I thought you were taking me to small claims court, or maybe putt putt.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The next day, Edith is walking though the woods, exercising, and working out her response.

EDITH
Who says “date” anymore”? Is that the only reason a man is on his best behavior?
(trying something else)
So you wouldn’t marry me, but you would sleep with me? So I’m auditioning to be your concubine?

INT. EDITH’S HOUSE - OFFICE - NIGHT

Now, Edith is curled up in a stylish reading chair in a home office, scribbling in a notebook.

EDITH
(v.o.)
“Colleen knew she was in for a long night when he showed up for dinner in an Italian restaurant wearing a golf tie.

INT. EDITH’S HOUSE - OFFICE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Now Edith is sitting at a laptop, transcribing her notebook.

EDITH
(v.o.)
“His rusty cufflinks looked like a long forgotten bar mitzvah present. I told him they looked neglected. ‘Sure,’ he responded. ‘So’s my Judaism. Are those for real?’ He was indicating my breasts. I nodded. ‘Are you?’”

Satisfied, she shuts her laptop screen, filling the screen with BLACKNESS.

END CREDITS.
EXT. UNIVERSITY - DAY

Establishing shot of a red brick commuter college.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

A horseshoe-shaped graduate creative writing workshop is in progress. The students are in their twenties and thirties, of mixed races and genders. Edith, the instructor, listens intently.

One young white male, FRANKLIN (23), is reading a short story aloud as the other students and Edith look on analytically.

FRANKLIN
"...and so what if the seventh floor dorm virgin got away. There would be more virgins for him to deflower. More hymens to bust. Yes, for now and forever he would be...’the Hymen Buster.’"

Franklin looks up from his manuscript hopefully. Edith hides her horror and tries to think of something constructive.

EDITH
Well, that was that. Does anybody have any comments?

STUDENT #1
I liked it.

STUDENT #1 (CONT’D)
Me, too. Great work.

STUDENT #3
I don’t know if you’re supposed to use hymen in some magazines.

FRANKLIN
What do you think, Edith?

EDITH
The hymen thing? Neither here nor there. It certainly isn’t the reason that this story isn’t going to get published...

(off Franklin’s reaction)

...in this form. Sometimes the reason that your writing can appear false is that you don't know your characters. You know the ones based on yourself. You may know the...
FRANKLIN
...hymen buster?

EDITH
Thank you, the hymen buster. But what about his victims?

FRANKLIN
You mean conquests?

EDITH
Whatever, yes. The women. Often, what happens is that the supporting characters are projections of the author, and remain flat. They do what the protagonist needs, or what the story requires.

FRANKLIN
But all the girls are random.

EDITH
There’s no such thing as a random girl. They are random to him, but not to themselves. You have to make sure that the choices that the characters make are believable. Why would all these young women sleep with such a detestable man?

FRANKLIN
The story is autobiographical.

EDITH
Fair enough. Why do all these women sleep with you?

FRANKLIN
Honestly, I don't know. And I guess I never cared. I see your point.

EDITH
If you can only write men and never understand women, you're crippled as a writer. You'll only be able to write about the British navy, or street gangs, or homosexual subcultures.

FRANKLIN
I'm not gay.
EDITH
Probably not. You're obviously not a woman either. You're a man, and you write like a man, which can be frustrating.

Edith catches herself.

EDITH (CONT'D)
I'm not trying to be mean. I'm not trying to criticize you. I'm here to critique your work. You just have to know your subject. Research, preparation, empathy. These are the tools you're going to need to break through to the next level with your fiction...

A student in the corner of her eye distracts her.

EDITH (CONT'D)
Excuse me, are you texting?

STUDENT #1
(defensively)
No, I'm googling something. For this class?

Another student checks her phone as well, and notes the time.

STUDENT #2
It's eleven-thirty.

EDITH
Great. See you next Monday.

The class breaks. Edith sighs. She isn't getting through.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY
The weekly faculty meeting of the English department. A crusty but benign CHAIR sits at the head of the table. Eight or so other professors line the sides, including Edith.

CHAIR
All right now, people, summer is almost here. You know what that means. Sharon is out with maternity leave, and we need someone to fill in for her in the Madrid program. Any takers? What about you, Mabel?

MABEL ARNETT, (60's, gypsy chic), cleans her glasses.
MABEL
I'm too old for that kind of thing.

CHAIR
Edith?

EDITH
No thanks.

CHAIR
Don't tell me you're too old.

EDITH
Very funny. It doesn't pay enough, people drink more than they learn, and my garden would die.

CHAIR
Anyone else? Marcus?

We now see that Marcus, Edith's non-date, is a member of this faculty meeting too.

MARCUS
Sorry, chief. I'm going to stick around and finish my book.

CHAIR
Someone's going to do it. Do I have to beg?

No eye contact from his faculty.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Edith is having lunch with Mabel: salads and cocktails.

MABEL
Okay, give it up. How was your date with Marcus?

EDITH
I didn't go on a date with Marcus.

MABEL
You said you were going to.

EDITH
Oh, I did tell you. Ugh. Let's just say he and I have competing narratives.
MABEL
Well, then why don't you want to teach in Spain?

EDITH
What's the connection?

MABEL
I would have guessed you were going to stay and spend the summer with him. Why else would you skip Spain?

EDITH
Should I do it?

MABEL
Of course, it's a big party. I was in the Greek program ten years in a row. You'll get laid, certainly.

EDITH
Yikes. What, with a student?

MABEL
No, they screw each other. Maybe another teacher. Maybe, gasp, a European?

EDITH
Mabel! I think you're the one who needs to get laid.

MABEL
It isn't that important. If it was I'd probably have gotten married.

EDITH
Did you ever want to get married?

MABEL
Maybe, at some point I did. But it’s hard to find a guy who wasn’t looking to breed me.

EDITH
You never wanted kids?

MABEL
Nope. I was afraid I’d never write again. Aren’t you? You should be.
EDITH
Half the stories I’ve ever written came out of my childhood. Childhood is magical. Wasn’t yours?

MABEL
Yes, but parenthood isn’t just revisiting your own childhood.

EDITH
I know that. I’ve spent half a life trying to figure out who I am. And I think I’d be good at helping a little someone do the same thing.

MABEL
Well, maybe you’ll work it out with Marcus.

EDITH
Can we change the subject? What are you writing?

MABEL
A poetry cycle, as usual. It’s about turntables. Mostly broken ones. It’s about a man who travels around fixing old record players, which allows people to resurrect the souls of the dead. It’s going to be great, eventually. Right now it still a total nightmare. I probably just need to find someone to fix my actual turntable. And you, what are you working on?

EDITH
Nothing right now. I’m stuck.

MABEL
So you might as well go to Spain. You’ll either get laid or do some great writing. You’ll either get a good time or a good story.

EDITH
I’ll probably have a more productive time staying home and growing tomatoes.

MABEL
Are you going to spray them with sevendust?
EDITH
You know how I feel about pesticide.

MABEL
Aphid City, then.

EDITH
They are plants. They should be able to grow without chemicals. What are you planting this summer?

MABEL
Early girls, better boys, mortgage lifters, maybe some sweet millions.

EDITH
Those are all kinds of tomatoes? Sweet millions?

MABEL
It's a cherry.

EDITH
I love creole tomatoes. There's nothing like a Creole tomato to make me feel like I'm in contact with the Almighty.

MABEL
But Creole tomatoes are man made.

EDITH
They are?

MABEL
The Creole tomato cultivar was originally bred in a lab at LSU.

EDITH
The Creole tomato was invented? That's depressing. I thought only God could make a tomato.

MABEL
"How ignorant art thou in thy pride of wisdom."

EDITH
Who's that, you?

MABEL
(shaking her head no)
(Frankenstein.)
(MORE)
MABEL (CONT'D)
If it makes you feel better, the Almighty created LSU. Just ask anybody in their football program.

EXT. EDITH’S GARDEN - DAY
An overhead shot of Edith tending her garden. It is a wreck. Her plans to grow tomatoes this summer are a lot of talk. She looks around, not sure where to begin.

INT. CHAIN BOOKSTORE - DAY
Edith tries to negotiate the aisles of this megastore. She approaches a salesperson at the information kiosk, who is angled away from Edith, looking down at a computer.

EDITH
I'm trying to find books about tomatoes?

SALESPERSON
I know, I know.

EDITH
What do you mean, you know?

SALESPERSON
Well, what do you want me to do about it?

EDITH
(raising her voice)
Excuse me?

The salesperson looks up at Edith for the first time, and we see the Bluetooth earpiece in her ear: she's been talking to someone else on the phone.

SALESPERSON
Sorry, what?

EDITH
Can you take that out, please?

SALESPERSON
I don't have to, what do you need?

EDITH
I'm trying to find books about tomatoes-
SALESPERSON
Shut up, I'm with a customer. Books about what?

EDITH
Breeding tomatoes. I'm trying to breed tomatoes?

SALESPERSON
Nine A.

The salesperson goes back to her conversation and Edith walks to aisle 9A.

She glances at a few titles before realizing she's in the women’s health section.

She clucks to herself, blaming yet another young person who can't listen.

She contemplates going back to the kiosk, but a title catches her eye: SINGLE MOTHERHOOD AFTER FORTY. An eyebrow raises.

She pulls the book out and starts flipping through it.

BARRY
(o.s.)
Ms. Barraclough?

Edith reacts with shock at being seen. She closes the book and turns to see BARRY (20).

EDITH
Hi...

BARRY
Barry Fitzwalter? I'm in your 4551 class?

EDITH
Of course. What are you doing here?

BARRY
It's a bookstore. I'm here to get free wi-fi. You?

EDITH
Oh, research. For something I'm writing.

BARRY
Really? What are you writing?
EDITH
I don't want to say. If you talk about it, you'll never do it.

BARRY
Oh. Well, nice seeing you.

He leaves, and she shelve the book.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY.

Edith lectures for twenty or so college seniors. This is an undergraduate class, in which Edith, instead of workshopping, is lecturing to a small crowd.

EDITH
There are two important questions in every story. The first one is: “Then what happens?” How will the plot turn out? The other one is...anyone? “Why?” The question is why. What makes people behave the way they do?

She starts drawing on the board: PHYSIOLOGY.

EDITH (CONT’D)
Well, Lajos Egri, in his Art of Dramatic Writing, has a theory of human motivation. Egri says that we are made up by our physiology: height, weight, race and so forth. This is the seed.

She keeps writing: SOCIOLOGY.

EDITH (CONT’D)
By our sociology: class, big family, small family. This is the soil in which the seed is planted. And the seed and the soil combine to make the character’s psychology.

She finishes writing. The board reads:

PHYSIOLOGY + SOCIOLOGY = PSYCHOLOGY

A student raises her hand.

STUDENT
Which one is more important, physiology or sociology?
Neither.

You used math symbols, I figured you could quantify them.

Well, that’s an interesting way to put it. Each character who has some sort of struggle may be wrestling with his or her nature and nurture. If I’m Tarzan, should I behave like a savage, or an aristocrat? If I’m Jesus, should I behave like the son of God or a nice Jewish boy?

Do you have an opinion?

Well, the seed, I suppose. The soil may determine if it’s a big tomato, a healthy tomato, how many, but it can’t make it into anything but a tomato. So, nature trumps nurture?

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - DAY

Edith lives in a shotgun house, the kind where all the rooms are connected. She paces as she talks on the wireless phone.

Hi, I was calling to find out your hours. Uh huh, and do you take walk-ins or do you have to make an appointment? For what? Consultation, tour, that sort of thing. What's your address?

Edith finds a pen (she has them everywhere) and writes down the address.

And how long does the meeting take? And do you have parking nearby? Is it public parking? Is it in front, or in back? Okay, great. Does it have to be my real name?
EXT. FERTILITY CLINIC - DAY

Edith drives her beat-up Toyota, craning her neck to check street numbers as she goes. She locates the Family Horizons Fertility Clinic (and a small crowd of demonstrators in front), sees the available parking, which is very visible, and parks two blocks away.

She walks two blocks, past many free spots, to find the clinic. She glances back and forth, making sure that no one has noticed her, then enters the clinic through a rear door.

INT. FAMILY HORIZONS FERTILITY CLINIC - DAY

This clinic has taken great steps to counteract the antiseptic feeling of a hospital. Lots of plant life, music, area rugs. A decorator's touch.

Edith enters. When she sees she is not the only woman waiting, she doesn't take off her sunglasses.

DR. TIMOTHY, a middle-aged male in a lab coat, comes out to greet Edith with a raised hand.

DR. TIMOTHY
Miss Barraclough? I'm Doctor Timothy.

INT. FERTILITY CLINIC - HALLWAY

Dr. Timothy leads Edith down the hallway.

DR. TIMOTHY
Are you nervous?

EDITH
This is my first visit to a sperm bank.

DR. TIMOTHY
We think of ourselves as a fertility clinic, if that helps. We help couples, or individuals conceive a child when they aren't able to by themselves. Are you with someone?

EDITH
No, not right now. Nor will I be, probably. I'm here on my own.
DR. TIMOTHY
That's fine. We can do everything from helping you find a donor to the full process of insemination.

INT. FERTILITY CLINIC - OFFICE - DAY.

Edith is sitting across from Dr. Timothy, who is behind a messy desk.

EDITH
I guess I'm looking for a donor.

DR. TIMOTHY
That's a great start. Do you know what you're looking for in a donor?

EDITH
Can I see what you have? Is there a book to flip through?

DR. TIMOTHY
Modern cryobank technology allows us much more variety than what we could keep in this building. We're not restricted geographically, meaning we can obtain specimens from all over the country and even the world. This frees you to be specific as to what kind of donor you're interested in. Different ethnicities, backgrounds, so on.

EDITH
Can I meet the donor?

DR. TIMOTHY
No, their participation is confidential. But that is only to protect their identity. Any relevant genetic question is answerable.

EDITH
What, like height, weight?

DR. TIMOTHY
Eye color, hair, skin color, skin tone and complexion. Ethnic background, any athletic pursuits, hobbies, education, languages spoken, IQ.
EDITH
Astrological sign?

DR. TIMOTHY
We have dates of birth, I'm sure we could work from there.

EDITH
Relationship history?

DR. TIMOTHY
I'm sure some of them include that.

EDITH
Photos? Video?

DR. TIMOTHY
Most of our donors aren't interested in divulging too much of their personal lives. But I can show you their baby photos, which might give you a sense of what your child might look like.

Dr. Timothy reaches into a drawer and pulls out a folder.

DR. TIMOTHY (CONT’D)
Many of them write essays. If you’d like to see some examples.

She hands Edith the folder and stands: this meeting is over.

DR. TIMOTHY (CONT’D)
So take your time, look it all over and give me a call. Is there anything else?

EDITH
Where do they produce the specimen?

His brow wrinkles. This question doesn't come up much.

INT. DONATION CHAMBER - DAY.

A gray, antiseptic room with several stalls, like a restroom.

Dr. Timothy stands in the doorway as Edith walks toward a stall and tentatively pushes the door open.

Inside is a soft chair, a night stand with a stack of porn magazines, a television/DVD player, and a stack of DVDs.
Edith examines a tray of lotions and oils and a stack of towels. Dr. Timothy is unclear why she’s examining so closely. Edith notices the television, and a stack of dvds. She examines the titles with distaste.

EDITH
It doesn't seem very medical. I mean, why do they have to watch this stuff?

DR. TIMOTHY
(picking words carefully)
It’s a standard practice to cultivate a comfortable environment for men to stimulate themselves. It counteracts the institutional surroundings, allows them to use their fantasies to produce the specimen.

Edith picks up a DVD: *Splendor in the Ass*.

EDITH
You don't think that their perversions in some way affect the specimen, do you?

DR. TIMOTHY
There's certainly no medical evidence to support that, no. Do you...spend a lot of time with men?

EDITH
I'm not a lesbian, if that's what you're asking. Why do you want to know?

DR. TIMOTHY
No reason.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Now Edith is teaching a freshman composition class. Thirty eighteen-year-olds, paying minimal attention. Her tone of voice suggests that she is trying to train a dog.

EDITH
Okay, the final drafts of your essays are due Friday. Friday. That’s non-negotiable. I need all of them for the weekend or there is a twenty-point penalty. Twenty points.

(MORE)
EDITH (CONT'D)
Remember the difference between
it’s and its. Between your and
you’re. Among there, their and
they’re. Never use a long word when
a diminutive one will do.

No laughter.

EDITH (CONT’D)
A preposition at the end of a
sentence is something up with which
I will not put.

Again, crickets. Tough crowd.

EDITH (CONT’D)
A semicolon separates two
independent clauses. A semicolon is
not a colon that is winking at you.

She gives up.

EDITH (CONT’D)
All right, get out of here. Wait, a
final commandment.
(gravitas)
Each of you is born with ninety-nine exclamation points to use for your entire life. Use them sparingly. Okay, now you can go.

The students begin to file out.

EDITH (CONT’D)
But you can have all the commas you want!

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Edith is tucked in a reading chair, trying to grade some particularly bad student work. These essays have dreadful grammar and spelling, particularly your/you're and there/their/they're.

She puts them down on her bedside table and notices a folder from the clinic.

She opens it and flips through the files of several anonymous donors. She pulls out a stack of autobiographical essays, each with a cute BABY BOY’S PHOTO attached. She reads with interest.

A CUTE BABY PHOTO
MALE VOICE 1
After a Rhodes scholarship I had
become used to the rhythms of
Oxford. I thought living in rural
Nicaragua would be a cultural
letdown. Anything but...

ANOTHER BABY PHOTO

MALE VOICE 2
I couldn't decide between medical
school and law school. I wanted to
help people, but which was the best
path? My choice was clear: both.
But in which order?

ANOTHER BABY PHOTO

MALE VOICE 3
I wasn't sure the best way to
embark on a career as a literary
translator. First I read Anna
Karenina in the original Russian.
Then I read all of the English
translations. I was finally ready
to do my own. But, I decided to
read it in Spanish and French
first.

She closes the folder: not bad at all.

She grabs her notebook and starts making notes. We see a
series of qualities: tall, teeth, hair...

She checks her watch, double checks it with the time on the
wall, then reaches for the phone and dials a number.

EDITH
Hi, Dr. Timothy? I came in there a
few days ago, inquiring about a
procedure, and I have a question.
(catching herself)
I've been reading these essays, and
I was just wondering. Could my
donor be Spanish?

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CLINIC - DAY

Edith is back at the clinic with Dr. Timothy.
DR. TIMOTHY
Good to see you again. We didn't think you'd be back.

EDITH
It took me three months to research my Toyota.

DR. TIMOTHY
So, what are you looking for in a donor?

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

As Edith reads from her notebook, Dr. Timothy inputs the information into his computer.

EDITH
Well, he's tall, and he has hair, and good teeth, and athletic. No criminal record. Reader of serious literature. And...I'm ambidextrous, which is a recessive trait, so if he was ambidextrous, then I could be sure that my child would be too.

DR. TIMOTHY
That is something we can sort for.

EDITH
And he can dance. And I'd like it if he were born in either 1966, 1978, or maybe 1954.

DR. TIMOTHY
(is that all?)
And Hispanic heritage.

EDITH

DR. TIMOTHY
We can see about that. Can I ask why those birth years?

EDITH
Well, that's the year of the horse in Chinese astrology, and I want the child to be a rabbit. I'm a rooster. It would just work out better.
DR. TIMOTHY
We can easily filter for birth year. Is 1990 a horse year? We'll be bound to have some of those.

Edith considers this: a child born in 1990 can be a father?

EDITH
Yes, I suppose.

DR. TIMOTHY
Good, good. Is that all? Is there anything you want your donor not to be?

EDITH
Nearby. Around.

DR. TIMOTHY
Very well. I'll see what we can come up with.

Dr. Timothy now ignores Edith and starts typing at his computer. Edith finds this awkward.

EDITH
Should I go?

DR. TIMOTHY
No, no. Found it.

Dr. Timothy presses print as Edith looks on amazed.

EDITH
That's it? You found my donor?

DR. TIMOTHY
If you like him. We can do it as early as your next ovulation.

Dr. Timothy pulls a manila folder and starts putting the papers into it.

EDITH
Actually, I'd prefer the end of the summer. August 15, in fact.

He hands Edith a thick folder. Edith takes a quick peek.

DR. TIMOTHY
Why the fifteenth? Is that Chinese Fourth of July or something?

Edith is not amused. Dr. Timothy regains his gravitas.
DR. TIMOTHY (CONT’D)
We can schedule something for the fifteenth.

Edith writes this date down.

EDITH
So, Monday, the fifteenth. Oh, one more thing.

DR. TIMOTHY
Yes?

EDITH
I want her to be a girl?

DR. TIMOTHY
The methods we use will give you about an 80% chance.

EDITH
That sounds great.

Edith exhales. This was easy.

INT. BATHROOM – DAY

Edith sits in the bath and reads the essay of donor #17464363678.

SPANISH VOICE
I was the youngest of thirteen children, and my father and mother had only planned for twelve.

She smiles. What a charmer.

SPANISH VOICE (CONT’D)
In our photographs, all of the children were dressed alike: white shirts, blue shorts, and a very peculiar paisley scarf. One day I asked my mother why she dressed us this way. She said, “we didn’t want to leave you behind.” I said, “yes, but why the paisley scarf?” She answered, “That is so we didn’t take home any who weren’t ours.”
INT. CHAIR’S OFFICE - DAY

Edith sticks her head in the office of her department’s chair.

    EDITH
    Still need that teacher for the Madrid program?

He nods.

INT. EDITH’S BEDROOM - DAY

Meanwhile, she packs for Spain, a meticulous process in which she attempts several alignments of items in her suitcase before committing.

    SPANISH VOICE
    I am seven years younger than my next oldest sibling. But they never said I was an accident. Accidents and miracles are just things that happen.

EXT. MABEL’S HOUSE - DAY

Edith is dropping off her cat (in a carrier) to Mabel in the doorway of her house.

    MABEL
    When are you coming back?

    EDITH
    August 17th. Wednesday the 17th.

    MABEL
    Have fun.

They hug.

INT. EDITH’S KITCHEN - DAY

Edith takes a bunch of canned goods and packs them into two plastic shopping bags. She leaves one bag on the counter, and a cabinet door open, as if she has stopped in the middle of unpacking groceries.

    SPANISH VOICE
    I am a happy man, married with many children of my own now.

    (MORE)
But I wanted to donate in the hopes of sharing my parents’ blessing.

Edith turns on the radio in her kitchen, then turns it up loud. She then carries the other plastic bag to...

...the living room. She twists a gooseneck desk-attached work light (with a pigtail fluorescent bulb) so that it casts a powerful white light into the hallway.

I only hope that the happiness of my family continues into the lives I am touching.

She picks up a BOBBLEHEAD figurine of Edgar Allen Poe and places it in front of the light, so that it casts a bobbling head shadow on the wall, as if someone is home.

She hears a HONK from outside, and checks her watch.

She moves through her house to the front door, dropping the shopping bag, deliberately.

Edith opens her front door to see that a TAXI is waiting to take her to the airport. She motions with her hand: give me a minute. She turns and re-enters her house.

She opens her front door and imagines that she's breaking in. She cocks her ear: can she hear that radio? Do the bobblehead shadow and the groceries make it seem like someone's home?

She nods: good enough. She grabs her rolling suitcase and carry-on and moves out the front door.

A GOTH STUDENT (early 20’s) student is reading from an iPad.
GOTH STUDENT
Shryll Dwarfenmoss brought his warhammer down with authority, deafening all of his chamberthanes. He did it again for emphasis. When the pointed ears of all the faeryfolk were cocked in his direction, he began his screed with a single word: FUUUUCK!!!!

Edith tries to keep her composure. But she hates this.

The open window reveals that this class is in Madrid.

EDITH
Well, you have something there. Did you bring that from home?

GOTH STUDENT
No, I wrote it over the weekend.

EDITH
You wouldn’t think about writing something more…present? You’re in Spain for the first time.

GOTH STUDENT
I only write about elves.

EDITH
Nothing else?

GOTH STUDENT
Well, I started to work on a series about zombies who solve crimes, but it seemed too derivative. Do you think that would be better?

EDITH
It just doesn’t feel honest. A lot of fantasy is about people who can’t deal with real life. If it was up to me I wouldn’t let you write about guns for a year. No zombies or vampires for two years. Lying is easy. Telling the truth is hard.

GOTH STUDENT
Books about elves get published.

EDITH
(sadly)
Yes, they do.
INT. SPANISH BAR - NIGHT

Edith drinks with several of her DRUNK STUDENTS.

   EDITH
   So what have you been reading?

   DRUNK STUDENT #1
   I just like to write. I hate to read anybody better than me.

   EDITH
   You feel inferior and stop writing.

   DRUNK STUDENT #1
   I need to feel like I'm the greatest writer in the world, or I get frustrated.

   EDITH
   I bet that makes it hard to revise your work.

She turns away to another student.

   EDITH (CONT’D)
   And you? Reading anything good?

   DRUNK STUDENT #2
   I’m spending a lot of times playing video games. I use them as plot generators.

Edith gets the attention of a middle-aged man, another TEACHER in this program.

   EDITH
   I think I'm going to go.

   TEACHER
   Oh don't be a prude. Have some fun.

   EDITH
   I have a date with George Eliot.

She stands to leave.

INT. SPANISH HALLWAY - NIGHT

Edith, drunk, stumbles down her hallway digging for her keys.

   VOICE
   Edith?
Edith freaks out and drops her keys. She turns to see TYLER, one of her workshop students.

    EDITH
    Oh I'm sorry, are you staying here?

    TYLER
    Yeah, right next door. I'm here with Caitlin, having a night cap. Want to come in? We scored some shitty weed from the handyman.

Edith lets this settle in. Why is he even telling her this?

    EDITH
    Um, no, Taylor...

    TYLER
    Tyler.

    EDITH
    Tyler. I'm beat, but thanks.

INT. EDITH'S SPANISH BEDROOM - NIGHT

Edith stays up listening to Tyler and Caitlin’s loud lovemaking in the next room, while she reads *Middlemarch*, by George Eliot.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. SPANISH RESTAURANT - DAY

An outdoor cafe. Edith smokes a cigarette and reads *Middlemarch*. She is farther along into it.

She takes a sip from her drink, and notices a tall handsome Spanish man with thick black hair.

She looks around to see any of her students in the vicinity. The coast is clear.

She takes out her camera and catches the stranger's eye.

He sees the camera. He nods, understanding, and reaches for her camera, to take her picture against the backdrop.

She poses formally at her table as he takes a photo of her.

He hands her the camera and she looks at the photo. She nods: not bad.
STRANGER
Uno mas?
She shakes her head no. He smiles, having done her a solid.
She motions that she wants to take his picture now.
He grins, flattered, and stands against his back drop.
She snaps, then looks at the results.

EDITH
(with body language)
One more, a safety. Uno mas.

He smiles again.

STRANGER
Sames? Or different?
She reacts to his English.

EDITH
Same.

She takes a second snap, which she likes better.
The stranger takes his seat nearby, flattered and confused.

Edith puts her novel down and pulls out her notebook, the one she use to scribble ideas. She begins writing.

EDITH (CONT'D)
(v.o.)
The first time I met your father, I was in a cafe in Madrid.

A long slow zoom in towards Edith as she writes.

EDITH (CONT'D)
(v.o.)
I needed someone to take my photo, and a stranger caught my eye. He seemed like the kind of man you could hand your phone to. Then he noticed my book and asked what I was reading. I said *Middlemarch*. Turns out he was a fan of the book. His name was Joaquin, and-

STRANGER
(Spanish accent)
What is your name?
Edith looks up. The stranger has joined her at her table. Edith wasn’t quite expecting this.

EDITH
Edith. Your name is...?

JAIME
I am Jaime. You are visiting?

EDITH
Yes, from New Orleans.
Nuevo...Orleans.

JAIME
Yes, I know. Jazz. The beach.

EDITH
No, we don’t have a beach in New Orleans.

JAIME
No beach? Where do you go for the sand?

EDITH
I usually drive to Pensacola, which is about three hours away.

JAIME
Yes, yes, Pensacola, Texas.

EDITH
No, Pensacola is in Florida,

JAIME
I have been to the Florida Islands. What are you doing here in Madrid?

EDITH
I am a teacher. What about you?

JAIME
I am a farmer.

EDITH
Really? What do you grow?

JAIME
Tomatoes.

Edith's lip curls: tomatoes?

EDITH
I grow tomatoes.
JAIME
No! On the island?

EDITH
New Orleans is not an island! My city is on a swamp. Very hot, very, sunny. Good for tomatoes.

JAIME
No, it’s a very bad place to grow tomatoes.

EDITH
Okay, it’s horrible. But why?

JAIME
The swamp, she is too humid. You should grow them somewhere that is hot, but dry.

EDITH
Oh. That explains it.

JAIME
What are you doing tonight?

EDITH
Why do you ask?

JAIME
My friends and I are going to see some music, and I’m sure you would enjoy yourself. Right over there.

He points at a nearby cafe.

JAIME (CONT'D)
Would you like to join me tonight?

EDITH
No thank you, I shouldn’t.

JAIME
What does this word mean, shouldn’t?

EDITH
Hmm...how about “No deberíamos”?

JAIME
Your Spanish is very good.

EDITH
Thank you.
JAIME
You’ve been to Mexico.

EDITH
That’s right. Did I say it right?

JAIME
No deberíamos”? Si. I still don't know the meaning of the word.

Now she gets his joke.

EDITH
You’re bad. It was nice to meet you, Jaime.

She leaves, and Jaime looks after her. She takes a few steps, then turns back. He’s looking at her.

EDITH (CONT'D)
What time does the music start?

EXT. SPANISH HALLWAY - NIGHT

Edith, dressed up for an evening out, walks loudly down the hall. She stops at Tyler's room and knocks on the door.

He answers, wearing his boxer shorts. He takes her in.

EDITH
I'm heading down the hill. Do you need anything?

TYLER
No, thanks.

EDITH
Staying in tonight?

TYLER
Yes, I have a lot of homework.

EDITH
Oh, yeah. Sorry about that. I'm going on a date.

TYLER
Well, you look hot, if you don't mind me saying so.

EDITH
Thank you, Tyler.
She moves on, glad that she looks good.

INT. MUSIC CLUB - NIGHT

Edith watches a flamenco performance in a crowded bar, standing next to Jaime.

JAIME
You are a botanist?

EDITH
No, I teach creative writing.

JAIME
Why do you study tomatoes?

EDITH
I love to eat them, but I’m not very good at growing them. So, I thought they might be worth writing about.

JAIME
I hope you will still be here on the 19th.

EDITH
Of August? Why?

JAIME
We have a festival in my hometown Buñol.

EDITH
Buñol?

JAIME
Yes, it is in Valencia.

EDITH
I'm sorry. I really have to be back by the 15th. What kind of festival?

JAIME
For tomatoes. It's called a tomatina and it's a celebration of the tomato harvest, and it culminates in a gigantic food fight. Everybody dresses in white. Then at noon, they all throw them at each other.

Edith is fascinated.
Does anybody get hurt?

We wear goggles.

It seems like a waste of food.

Not really. The best tomatoes are picked early. The ones for salads. These, these are the leftovers.

(American accent) Tomatoes. This is how you say it?

Edith laughs.

Yes, but British people say it differently. I like the Italian pomodoro.

The name in the Latin is lycopersicum, which means, how do you say, “wolf peach.” It was thought to be attractive to werewolves.

Because it is a deadly nightshade.

Yes. It is silly. The tomato is essentially an ovary. Like a woman.

But the tomato contains its own seeds.

It has a feminine purpose, to make more life. And if it does not fulfill that purpose, then it is used for celebration.

Edith's eyes sparkle.

And maybe, in the middle of the celebrations, a few seeds, they will be planted.
EDITH
That’s beautiful.

JAIME
I would really like to kiss you right now.

EDITH
What?

JAIME
Would you like me to kiss you?

EDITH
Uh, no. But it has been wonderful meeting you, Jaime.

She offers a handshake, which Jaime accepts, confused.

JAIME
Are you sure?

Edith is already walking away.

EDITH
I am, but thank you. This has been a perfect evening.

JAIME
It’s ten-thirty!

EXT. SPANISH STREET – NIGHT

Edith is walking home, drunk, and ranting to herself.

EDITH
Sure, it’s ten-thirty in Spain, but that’s only four-thirty where I live.

(shakes her head: lame)
I know it’s ten-thirty. I’ve been drinking since two! I was doing shots while you were all taking your siesta. Don’t I deserve a siesta? If I stay out too late, I won’t get any writing done.

INT. SPANISH HALLWAY – NIGHT

Edith ascends the stairs and prepares to walk down the hall. She sees that the light is on under Tyler’s door, she untucks her shirt and musses up her hair.
She does her best loud shame walk down the hallway, expecting the door to open at any time. It doesn't.

INT. EDITH'S SPANISH ROOM - NIGHT

Edith is in bed, polishing off a bottle of wine and writing in her notebook.

EDITH
(v.o.)
That night, Joaquin took me flamenco dancing. The music was magical. He smelled wonderful, then afterwards, we went out to the veranda...

Edith puts her pen down.

EDITH (CONT'D)
Why didn't I kiss him?

She knocks her head against the headboard behind her, an act of subtle flagellation.

She takes another sip of wine and regrets some more.

EDITH (CONT'D)
Why?

She bangs her head again.

EDITH (CONT'D)
Why?

Again.

INT. TYLER'S ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Tyler and Caitlin pass a joint, listening to the banging coming from Edith's room. It sounds like she's having a pretty good time on her side. They share a knowing look.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MORNING

Edith is checking out of her lodging.

EDITH
May I leave my luggage here? I'll be back in an hour.
The old woman behind the desk nods: sure.

EXT. PUBLIC SQUARE - MORNING
Edith sits at the same table she and Jaime shared.

She is addressing a series of postcards and envelopes to herself in Louisiana. She is writing with her opposite hand.

A waiter arrives.

EDITH
Una cerveza, y una sangria?

A beer and a sangria show up. She takes a sip of the beer, not enjoying it, then places the wet glass on her envelope. It leaves a ring, smearing the address. She smiles: perfect.

She continues to address the envelopes.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY
Edith hands the packet of mail to the old woman.

EDITH
Would you send this mail for me?

LANDLADY
Of course.

EDITH
Now, there's a trick to it. Each envelope has a date on it, which is when you should send it.

LANDLADY
I see I see.

A BLACK SCREEN.

The eyes adjust until it is clear we are inside...

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - DAY
A dark hallway. A key in the lock, and Edith opens the door, allowing in a shaft of daylight. Jetlagged and half asleep, she moves into the house until...

EDITH
Oh my god!
Edith freaks out for a second, scared by the bobblehead shadow against the wall. She sits and catches her breath.

EXT. FERTILITY CLINIC - DAY

Edith, in sunglasses, parks carefully and walks toward her clinic nervously, looking around for witnesses.

INT. FERTILITY CLINIC - DAY

Edith, in a hospital gown, leans back and fits her feet into a set of stirrups. She clears her mind and closes her eyes.

FADE TO WHITE.

MUSIC: Minnie Riperton, "Les Fleur"

A WHITE WALL

We are back in Spain.

A figure in white inches into the screen clutching the wall. It is Edith, looking nervous.

She hugs the wall, nervous about the threat she is facing:

A close-up of a ripe tomato, slowly revolving in the air...
...tossed up and down by a teenager, also dressed in white...
...one of a crowd in white, armed with buckets of tomatoes.

Edith’s frightened reaction.

The teenager begins a wind up. He wants to be the first to hit Edith, but he is stopped by an elder, who points up at...

...the town clock: ten seconds to noon.

The elder’s expression: not yet.

Edith looks up at the clock, then around: what to do?

Her perspective is a crowd of hundreds of townspeople in white, holding ripe tomatoes.

The clock strikes noon.

The crowd starts throwing.

Edith flinches.
Tomatoes slowly zooming through the air.
Jaime, Edith’s handsome stranger, swoops in.
The tomatoes splatter against his back as he shields Edith.
They run from the crowd.
They make it make to Edith’s room.
They tear each other’s tomato-stained whites off.
They make passionate love on the bed, as the tomato fight rages outside their window.

CUT TO:

AS THE MUSIC REACHES crescendo, we cut to footage of an insemination. Seas of sperm swoosh into ovaries. The miracle of life at its very beginning.

INT. FERTILITY CLINIC - DAY

Edith opens her eyes. This is happening.

FADE TO BLACK.

TEN WEEKS LATER

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Edith is listening to a student with many facial piercings in her graduate fiction workshop read out loud.

FACIAL PIERCING STUDENT
Edward slowly removes the young man’s shirt, and slowly rubs his hands over his glistening young torso. He covers the supple flesh with wet kisses before kneeling and moving south. He unzips, and his last word comes...“Jacob.”

Edith tries to keep a straight face at what is revealed to be “Twilight” fan fiction. A fist over her mouth stifles a laugh into a cough, which becomes a faux coughing fit.

But then a cough is different, and Edith’s face conveys desperation. She rises.
EDITH
Sorry. I have to- I’ll be right back.

Edith rises and swiftly moves out of class...

INT. HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

...into the hallway. She sprints to the ladies’ room. As the door shuts behind her, obscuring our view, VOMITING is heard.

INT. FERTILITY CLINIC - DAY

Edith sits in Dr. Timothy’s office.

DR. TIMOTHY
Congratulations. You’re pregnant.

EDITH
How pregnant?

DR. TIMOTHY
Eight weeks. Your fetus looks very healthy.

EDITH
Is it a girl?

DR. TIMOTHY
We won’t know for a little longer, but I don’t see anything.

EDITH
You mean a...?

DR. TIMOTHY
Penis, yes. If the angle of the sonogram is right, you can see it.

(amused by a memory)

Sometimes they even get erections.
Big ones, too. One time...

Dr. Timothy catches Edith’s reaction and settles down. She doesn’t want to hear about fetal erections.

EDITH
So what happens now?

DR. TIMOTHY
Well, we’ll put you in touch with a hospital. Do you have a partner?

(MORE)
DR. TIMOTHY (CONT'D)
Not necessarily a romantic partner, but someone who will go through this process with you?

EDITH
No, no. I’m still a solo act.

DR. TIMOTHY
That’s fine. Let me get some literature for you.

Dr. Timothy starts shuffling around his messy desk.

EDITH
When can I tell other people?

DR. TIMOTHY
We usually recommend waiting until the twelve week point.

EDITH
So, four weeks from now?

DR. TIMOTHY
Sure. It’s very exciting, isn’t it?

Edith smiles.

INT. EDITH’S HOUSE - DAY

Music over:

Edith redecorates her home office into a baby’s room.

She drags old furniture out of the room.

She measures the walls and makes marks.

With some difficulty she successfully hangs wallpaper.

The wallpaper is pink, and has little tomatoes on it.

She builds a cradle and places it artfully in the corner.

As a finishing touch, there is a blank rectangle on the wall over the cradle.

By hand, she paints the baby’s name in calligraphy: ROSA.

She smiles at her handiwork.
INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Edith walks down the hallway toward her office, passing the open door of Marcus, whose office is next to hers.

MARCUS
Edith?

She stops at his doorway.

EDITH
Hi.

MARCUS
I feel like we haven’t talked all semester. How was your summer?

EDITH
Good, good. Yours?

MARCUS
Oh fine. Just stayed in the a.c. The whole time. You probably had more fun in Spain.

EDITH
(what’s your point)
I probably did.

MARCUS
Uh, so, I was wondering. I’ve been thinking a lot about our dinner. I regret some of the things I said, and I was wondering if you’d like to go out with me again sometime. (off her reaction)
On a date.

EDITH
I’m sorry, Marcus. I’m seeing someone.

MARCUS
You are? I had no idea. I just haven’t seen you with anyone.

EDITH
He lives in Spain. We’re quite serious.

Marcus, crestfallen, has a hard time accepting this as fact.
MARCUS
(feeble attempt)
Is it because I’m Black?

Edith walks away, not dignifying Marcus’s joke.

EDITH
(ranting to herself)
It’s because you had your chance.
If I dated you now I’d deserve what
happened to me. What was I
thinking? It’s because you’re an
oaf!
(trying words out)
A dolt! Trogloodyte! Ninnyhammer!
Jobbernowl!

Students see her muttering as she walks by: what is her deal?

INT. RESTAURANT – DAY

Edith and Mabel are having lunch in their usual place. A
waiter is taking their drink orders.

MABEL
I’ll have a Bloody Mary.

EDITH
Iced tea for me.

MABEL
What’s the matter? Are you on some
kind of health kick?

EDITH
It’s a cleanse. So, how did the
writing go this summer?

MABEL
Pretty good. I’ll have a draft for
you soon. How about you? What did
you end up writing this summer?

EDITH
Um, I did a lot of outlining. But
nothing worth talking about.

MABEL
Oh, I see. What’s his name?

EDITH
(ready to dish)
Joaquin. Estragon.
MABEL
Spaniard?

She nods.

MABEL (CONT’D)
Take it from the top. How did you meet?

EDITH
Well, there is a town in Valencia called Buñol, where they have a Tomatina, which is a tomato fight.

MABEL
I’ve heard about this.

EDITH
Joaquin saved my life. I was about to get caught in a crossfire between the Montagues and the Capulets. And he took a bullet for me. He took a tomato for me. Later, I went to see his family’s farm.

MABEL
You know my next question. What kind of tomatoes do they grow?

EDITH
He lives in Northern Aragon, where they grow a pink tomato called Rosa de Barbastro.

MABEL
Wow, pink tomatoes. Are they good?

EDITH
They are amazing.

MABEL
How’s his English?

EDITH
Not great.

MABEL
Neither is your Spanish.

EDITH
He’s very intelligent, but he’s kind of shy in conversation. We didn’t talk that much.
MABEL
I bet. What’s his favorite book?

EDITH
*Middlemarch.*

MABEL
You love *Middlemarch.* Do you have a photo?

EDITH
I do.

Edith produces her photo of Jaime.

MABEL
Now, that’s a good looking man. But not much English?

EDITH
Not that bad. His letters are well written.

Edith pulls out one of the Spanish envelopes she arranged to mail to herself.

MABEL
Letters? They don’t have e-mail in Spain, I suppose.

EDITH
Oh, Mabel. You know darn well that romance is better on paper.

Edith reads her letter aloud.

EDITH (CONT’D)
“My dear Wolf Peach, there was a great harvest this year…”

MABEL
Wolf Peach?

EDITH
It’s a nickname for tomatoes. Isn’t that priceless?

MABEL
You bet. You know you could Skype?

EDITH
What, talk through the Internet? No, I hate that.
MABEL
Don't you miss him?

EDITH
Of course I miss him. I just want to take my time with this one.

MABEL
When is he coming to visit?

EDITH
I don't know about that. His job is really demanding. It would be nice to see him again, but if not, we'll always have Madrid.

MABEL
If you want to see him again, you have to see each other again in the next few months.

EDITH
We're going to do our best.

Their drinks arrive. They toast, Bloody Mary to iced tea.

MABEL
Honey, you better hold onto that man for dear life.

They drink.

MABEL (CONT’D)
joking
You’re probably pregnant.

Edith says nothing. Mabel finishes her sip, looks at Edith and knows.

MABEL (CONT’D)
You’ve got to be kidding me.

EDITH
I’m not supposed to tell anyone. Keep it a secret.

MABEL
“It’s a cleanse”!

EDITH
Sorry.

MABEL
Did you get pregnant on purpose?
EDITH
No, but it just seemed right.

Mabel looks down at the photo.

MABEL
That is going to be one handsome baby.

EDITH
I think we’re going to name her Rosa, after the pink tomatoes.

MABEL
It’s a girl?

EDITH
Probably.

MABEL
To Rosa.
   (correcting herself)
   That is going to be one gorgeous baby.

They clink glasses again.

INT. EDITH’S KITCHEN – DAY

Edith is on a cordless phone, talking to her mother, Nancy.

EDITH
So, Mom, I’ve been meaning to ask you. Do you know that hand-carved chest that I used to have when I was little?

NANCY
(o.s.)
The one that was in Lisa’s and your room? Sure.

EDITH
What are you going to do with that when you move?

NANCY
I’m planning to give it to Lisa.

EDITH
Lisa? Why?
NANCY
Well, she and Bill are planning to have kids, and I thought it would be nice for it to be in a little girl’s room again.

EDITH
In that case, you might want to rethink that. I have a good room for it here.

NANCY
How do you figure?

EDITH
Well, it looks like there’s going to be a little girl in my house.

NANCY
What, are you taking in boarders?

EDITH
I’m going to be a mother.

NANCY
Oh my god. You did it. You adopted a baby.

EDITH
What? No, Mom.

MOM
When does he show up?

EDITH
I’m not adopting. I’m pregnant.

MOM
What? How?

EDITH
What do you think? The normal way.

MOM
You aren’t married. You aren’t even seeing anybody.

EDITH
Mom, I am. Sort of. His name is Joaquin, we met in Spain.

MOM
What’s his last name?
EDITH
Estragon. Aren’t you excited about the baby? I think it’s going to be a girl!

MOM
I am excited, but we won’t be meeting her for another seven months. When do we meet the guy?

EDITH
Well, there are no plans for him to visit. He’s very busy.

MOM
Are you going to get married?

EDITH
No! I mean, we’re going to wait until after.

MOM
That’s very contemporary.

A beep comes through Edith’s connection.

EDITH
Mom, that’s my other line. Be right back.

Edith clicks over.

EDITH (CONT’D)
Hello?

DR. TIMOTHY
Edith Barraclough? This is Dr. Timothy, from the Fertility clinic? How are you?

EDITH
I'm fine. How are you? Is everything okay?

DR. TIMOTHY
Yes, everything's fine...with me.

EDITH
Uh, is everything fine with me?

DR. TIMOTHY
Everything's fine with you, you're perfectly healthy.
Edith exhales, relieved.

   EDITH
   That's good to hear.

   DR. TIMOTHY
   But your baby.

   EDITH
   What's wrong with my baby? What's wrong with her?

   DR. TIMOTHY
   I think you better come in.

   EDITH
   I'll be right over.

Edith hangs up and grabs her purse. As she moves to the door, the phone starts ringing again: she left her mother hanging.

She ignores the phone and leaves.

EXT. FERTILITY CLINIC - DAY

Edith sees a crowd of protesters outside the front door of the clinic again, so she drives around back.

She parks (poorly), gets out and enters via the back door.

INT. FERTILITY CLINIC - OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Timothy is reading a prepared statement to Edith.

   DR. TIMOTHY
   “Ms. Barraclough, you signed a release before your insemination procedure acknowledging the risks involved, that there would be no guarantee of a pregnancy, or that you would not experience a miscarriage. In your case, while a healthy pregnancy has been the result, we must admit that there has been a discrepancy with your procedure.”

   EDITH
   Is my daughter going to be healthy?
DR. TIMOTHY
Actually, we can now see that your child will be a son.

EDITH
Oh. Oh. Well, we were prepared for that, right?

DR. TIMOTHY
Yes.

EDITH
And he’s healthy? What is the discrepancy?

DR. TIMOTHY
(how do I say this?)
The discrepancy is with your specimen.

EDITH
I don’t understand.

DR. TIMOTHY
You have been inseminated with a specimen from a different donor.

EDITH
Oh. Oh. But a healthy specimen?

DR. TIMOTHY
Yes, all the donors are screened for disease, and are of a high genetic caliber.

EDITH
But the donor is not who I ordered.

DR. TIMOTHY
No.

EDITH
Is he ambidextrous?

DR. TIMOTHY
No.

EDITH
Is he Spanish?

DR. TIMOTHY
No.
EDITH
Was he born in 1966?

DR. TIMOTHY
No.

EDITH
'78?

DR. TIMOTHY
No.

EDITH
Is he bigger than a breadbox? My god, what year was he born?

Dr. Timothy checks the paperwork.

DR. TIMOTHY

EDITH
Year of the Monkey? What's his IQ?

DR. TIMOTHY
He's very intelligent. Pursuing a BS in chemistry. Graduated high school summa cum laude.

Edith is trying her best to process all this.

EDITH
Not too bad. Can he dance?

DR. TIMOTHY
That is unclear at this time.

EDITH
What am I forgetting to ask?

DR. TIMOTHY
He's Black.

EDITH
Oh. Oh. So he's definitely not from Spain.

DR. TIMOTHY
No, he's from here.

EDITH
Oh, my god. Did you get anything right?
DR. TIMOTHY
Well, you're still on track to have a Taurus.

EDITH
What's his name?

DR. TIMOTHY
Well, we still can't tell you his name. But there are some other things I can share.

Dr. Timothy hands Edith a manila folder, which Edith accepts. She fans the folder back and forth, its bendiness betraying its lack of heft.

DR. TIMOTHY (CONT’D)
I'm sorry. We guaranteed his privacy.

EDITH
Guaranteed.

DR. TIMOTHY
Yours is too. Nobody ever has to know this occurred.

EDITH
What happened? How and why does something like this happen?

DR. TIMOTHY
It was a labeling mistake. We had a faulty labeler.

EDITH
A labeler? Is that a machine?

DR. TIMOTHY
No, it’s a person, a medical technician.

EDITH
A person. What was his excuse?

DR. TIMOTHY
He had food poisoning. He had eaten a bad Reuben.

EDITH
A Reuben sandwich?
DR. TIMOTHY
Yes. He should have gone home. We are very sorry.

Dr. Timothy goes back to the paper on his desk: the legalese.

DR. TIMOTHY (CONT’D)
It was of paramount importance that you understand your current biological state. You should take some time to decide what you would like to do next.

EDITH
What do you mean? Can I get a do-over?

DR. TIMOTHY
While I am not empowered to negotiate on behalf of our clinic at this time, if you are interested in another procedure with your intended donor, I’m sure this can be arranged.

EDITH
When? I mean, how soon can we redo?

DR. TIMOTHY
There is the matter of your current pregnancy, which you will either take to term or terminate.

EDITH
Terminate?

DR. TIMOTHY
If you have any other questions, don’t hesitate to call.

Edith, dazed, gets up and heads to the door. Her final words:

EDITH
If I have any other questions?

INT. HALLWAY – DAY

Edith walks down the hall, talking to herself. She passes several LARGE FRAMED PHOTOS OF HAPPY FAMILIES. None of them are multi-racial.
EDITH
Do I have any other questions? Sure? Like, what can you do to a bad labeler? Can you put something he doesn’t want inside of him? Can I label him? God, I should have known this would happen when I saw your desk! If you can’t put your pens in your pen cup, why should I let you put anything in my uterus!

She stops at a photo of a beautiful Black child. She contemplates it: is this what her baby will look like now?

Edith absentmindedly moves to the front door, opening it...

EXT. FERTILITY CLINIC - DAY - CONTINUOUS

...into a small crowd of PRO-LIFERS she has been avoiding. They are picketing and praying behind a police cordon. They scream at Edith as she passes.

Having passed the cordon, Edith gets an idea then turns back around. She takes a flyer from one and looks at it. It reads: THE WORST OFFENDERS. It’s a list of local abortion clinics and addresses. Edith pockets the list and moves around the corner to her car.

INT. EDITH’S HOUSE - BABY’S ROOM - DAY

Edith, sitting on the floor of her pink former office, reluctantly opens the folder and reads the essay.

MALE VOICE
There is a dual desire in the heart of every mature male adult. To hunt and gather, and to plant his seed. I knew that I wanted to plant my seed, but I wasn’t ready to stop hunting or gathering. I have no plans to get married or start a family.

EDITH
You would, you’re a Gemini.

MALE VOICE
Not until I’ve achieved some of my larger goals. Finishing a doctorate in applied sciences, getting a job at a major corporation, while inventing on the side.

(MORE)
Someday, I’ll come up with the thing that will let me retire. Hopefully by thirty. Then I may devote myself to law, or perhaps politics.

Edith, feeling a rush of nausea, drops the essay, and looks around room desperately. She finally locates a PONYTAIL HOLDER and rushes to the bathroom, where she can be heard vomiting loudly.

A faucet runs, and Edith groans, then gargles. She re-enters and picks up the packet again. Not bearing to read the essay, she lifts the wallet-sized photograph.

The photo is of her specimen donor at five, a cute African American boy with missing teeth, smiling broadly.

Edith's look speaks volumes: this isn't Joaquin.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

A crowded shopping mall. Edith emerges from a photo booth, which promises to combine two photos. The machine has a sign which reads WHAT WOULD YOUR CHILD LOOK LIKE?

Edith waits for her photo to spit out. When it arrives, she looks at the messed up combo of a five-year-old African American boy with missing teeth and a forty-year-old white professor.

She looks at the photo in disbelief.

EDITH
(v.o.)
A stranger’s child is growing inside me.

INT. PRIVATE DETECTIVE’S OFFICE - DAY

Edith is sitting in a private detective's office, wearing a wig. The detective is reading his findings to her.

DETECTIVE
This one was pretty easy. Place of birth, high school, college, race, Facebook. His name is Kelvin Robertson. He went to Forest Lawn Academy, then Loyola, then Mercer.

EDITH
How long did he take?
DETECTIVE
Again?

EDITH
To graduate. When did he graduate?

DETECTIVE
Didn’t graduate.

EDITH
Undergrad? What about grad school?

DETECTIVE
No record.

EDITH
Wow.

DETECTIVE
Arrest record, charge expunged. I have an address. Works at a karaoke bar called the Brass Monkey. The rest is in here.

EDITH
Thank you. I’m sure I’ll be able to take it from here.

He hands the folder over to her.

DETECTIVE
I take Visa, Mastercard, AmEx and personal checks, with a state issued ID.

EDITH
Would you accept cash?

DETECTIVE
Who hates cash?

INT. THE BRASS MONKEY - NIGHT

This garishly lit karaoke joint is the first bar Edith has been in since becoming pregnant. She wanders up to the bar and attracts the attention of a handsome African American BARTENDER (mid 20s).

BARTENDER
Hey, how are you doing?

EDITH
Good, you?
BARTENDER
Blessed. Can I get you a beer?

She sizes him up. Not bad.

EDITH
(I will keep this baby)
Hmmm...probably not. Mineral water.

He gets her drink.

EDITH (CONT'D)
So...come here often?

BARTENDER
Ha ha. What’s a girl like you doing in a place like this?

EDITH
Touche. The usual.

BARTENDER
Okay, what’s your number?

EDITH
What?

BARTENDER
What song are you here to sing?

EDITH
Oh, I was just kidding. I don’t sing. I just heard the...drinks were good here.

Edith gives up on her line halfway through.

BARTENDER
Uh, okay. (to his side)
Kelvin, I’m taking my ten!

And with that, this bartender exits, and Edith looks down the bar, confused. She thought this guy was Kelvin. But, no.

Down the bar is a small, chanting crowd. Edith looks closer, to see that a duel is going on. A hefty FRATBOY (20) is wolfing down a tray of hot peppers, as people cheer around him. He finishes, but looks a little green. Next, it is the bartender’s turn.
This skinny African American guy (21) wears an ironic T-shirt that reads EPIC FAIL, skinny jeans, and a tall, ridged Afro fauxhawk. He has a prominent neck tattoo, among other markings. This is KELVIN, and it’s his turn.

Kelvin gobbles up a line of peppers without blinking, to the amazement of all. He finishes by filling a shot glass with Tabasco and shooting it. This is over.

Not yet, signals the fratboy. He takes the Tabasco bottle and pours a shot of his own. He shoots it, smiles confidently and then vomits.

Laughter, jeers, victory. Kelvin raises both fists.

Edith looks at him in shock: this is Kelvin?

Kelvin collects money for his bar bet and walks down the bar toward Edith. He notices her staring at him.

KELVIN
Why are you looking at my hair?

EDITH
I think I was trying not to stare at your neck.

KELVIN
You don't like my ink?

EDITH
What is it?

KELVIN
You have to look closer and check it out.

She leans over the bar to look.

EDITH
That looks like Princess Leia...

KELVIN
Uh huh.

EDITH
And she's sitting on R2D2. But why?

KELVIN
(disappointed)
She's using him for a vibrator.

Edith sees that yes, Leia is using R2D2 for a vibrator.
EDITH (disgusted)
Is that why you got a tattoo on your neck, to make women come over to you?

KELVIN (stating the obvious)
I also like Star Wars.

EDITH
You don't worry that...that would keep you from getting a job?

KELVIN
What kind of job?

EDITH
Like at a law firm, or maybe political office?

KELVIN
Well, another reason to get a neck tattoo is to remind yourself never to get stuck in some dipshit job in the first place.

EDITH
Lawyers are dipshits?

KELVIN
You ask a lot of questions, counsellor. Are you, by chance, a dipshit?

EDITH
How could you tell, my neck?

KELVIN
Hey, can I buy you a drink? I just won a hundred bucks.

EDITH
Yeah, give me a Scotch.

KELVIN
I could make you something much more interesting. I have an associate’s degree in mixology. How do you feel about rosehip tincture?

EDITH
Interesting is overrated.
Kelvin nods (suit yourself) and pours her a tall Scotch.

EDITH (CONT’D)
How long have you been a bartender?

KELVIN
I’m not just a bartender. That doesn’t define me.

EDITH
Oh, you’re “one who tends bar.”

KELVIN
Well, I’m still barbacking, but it’s one of my many gigs.

EDITH
What else rounds out the CV?

KELVIN
Scooter mechanic, notary public, mail order minister, Linux programmer, hot pepper eater, life coach?

EDITH
Life coach?

KELVIN
I know, that sounds bad. How about “happiness consultant”?

EDITH
How about “student”?

KELVIN
Not any more, no. I learned enough.

EDITH
So no career path?

KELVIN
God, no. Might as well wear a tie.

EDITH
What, and blindfold Princess Leia?

KELVIN
What do you do?

EDITH
I’m a college professor.
KELVIN
No wonder you're so bitter. What's your favorite band?

EDITH
Wow. Now put me in a box. Uh, I don't know, Joni Mitchell?

KELVIN
Who?

EDITH
(aghast)
Do you suppose I could buy back my introduction to you?

KELVIN
What?

EDITH
Nothing. Groucho Marx. How about Minnie Riperton? Heard of her?

KELVIN
(I know that name)
Sort of.

EDITH
I presume you have a favorite band, or should I just check the other side of your neck?

KELVIN
TV on the Radio, who you've probably never heard of.

EDITH
TV on the Radio? That doesn't sound like a band. So it probably is one.

KELVIN
I bet you're one of those people who doesn't own a television.

EDITH
(she is)
Quit reading my mail.

KELVIN
What's mail?

A hot girl walks up to the bar. This is MADISON (21).
MADISON
Where the fuck have you been?

KELVIN
Right here! I’m sorry. Is it time?

MADISON
It’s been time! Don’t keep me waiting.

KELVIN
Are you getting up with me?

MADISON
After I’ve been hanging out by the stage for ten minutes? Fuck you.

KELVIN
But I need you! Please? Just stand in front, let me serenade you.

Madison flips Kelvin off and walks away.

EDITH
Is that your girlfriend?

KELVIN
Not yet. Nice talking to you, ma’am.

Kelvin moves from behind the bar and runs up to the karaoke stage. The backing track starts, and Kelvin starts rapping to Madison, who stands nearby with her arms crossed. The song is the nasty “Wait (the Whisper Song)” by the Ying Yang Twins.

KELVIN (CONT’D)
Hey how ya doing lil momma let me whisper in ya ear, Tell ya something that ya might like to hear, Got a sexy ass body and yo ass look soft. Mind if I touch it and see if it's soft? Naw I'm just playin less you say I can and I'm known to be a real nasty man. I hear they say a closed mouth don't give in, and I don't mind askin for head...

Edith looks at her Scotch, untouched. Should she take a sip?

EDITH
(to herself)
Ma'am?
Back at the stage, Kelvin continues.

KELVIN
Hey bitch, wait 'til you see my
dick, wait 'til you see my
dick, hey bitch. Wait 'til you see my
dick I'm gon beat that pussy up...

CUT TO:

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - DAY

Edith is walking from room to room on the phone.

EDITH
Hi, is this Planned Parenthood? No,
I don't want to make an appointment
yet. I just want to talk to
somebody about...I guess I do want
to make an appointment.

The mail falls through the mail slot. Edith retrieves it.

EDITH (CONT'D)
How long does it take to get there?
And what's the address? Do you guys
have parking? Is it inside, or
private? Is anybody protesting?
Could you look outside and see if
anyone is out there right now?

Flipping through the mail, she notices a letter from Spain,
and the return address reads Joaquin Estragon.

EDITH (CONT'D)
Yes, Tuesday works.

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - DAY - LATER

Edith has opened the letter, and reads it to herself.

JAIME
(v.o.)
My dearest Wolf Peach, how I miss
your face. I know our child is no
bigger than an olive, but somehow I
know our baby will be a beautiful
girl. I think you should name her
Rosa, so that you will always
remember the soil where our love
bore fruit.
Edith smirks. Even she knows she laid it on a little thick.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Edith is walking out of her classroom.

MARCUS
Edith?

Edith turns to see Marcus.

MARCUS (CONT’D)
Haven’t seen you around much this week.

EDITH
I’ve been working from home.

MARCUS
You’ve been sick, I heard.

EDITH
(awkward)
Yeah.

MARCUS
Congratulations are in order.

EDITH
Oh, you heard?

MARCUS
Yeah, is it public?

EDITH
Yeah, I suppose so.

MARCUS
I know there can be complications when the mother is...

He means older. She bristles.

EDITH
Well, there aren’t. Everything is just fine.

MARCUS
It’s just, I know you are somewhere else with your life, but I’d still like to take you to lunch sometime. I miss talking to you.
EDITH
Marcus, I’m sorry. I’m just going through a lot right now.

She walks away.

MARCUS
(calling after)
Is it because I need to lose a few pounds?

INT. MABEL’S OFFICE – DAY

We enter the scene as Edith confronts Mabel, who is sitting in her crowded professor’s office.

EDITH
I asked you not to tell anybody.
And you told Marcus?

MABEL
What can I say? I like the guy. He needed to hear it.

EDITH
I’m in a relationship.

MABEL
Yes, I know. But I don’t like Joaquin for you.

EDITH
Be nice. That’s the father of my child.

MABEL
So when’s he going to visit?

EDITH
He’s coming in a few months. He’s going to be here for the birth.

MABEL
He better. And I hope he stays.

EDITH
(lying)
He probably will.

MABEL
Promise? Don’t move to Madrid.
EDITH
I won't. Promise.

INT. RECORD STORE - DAY
Edith purchases a CD by TV on the Radio, an African-American rock band.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY
Edith, wearing headphones, listens to TV on the Radio as she rakes the overgrown vines in her patch of the community garden. It looked bad at the beginning of the summer. Four more months of nothing have left it a tangled mess.

Edith puts her shoulder into it. She is starting over.

The music continues over...

INT. EDITH’S HOUSE - DAY
CLOSE UP on Edith sitting on the floor eating a salad.

PULL BACK to reveal that she is in her partially wallpapered nursery room, decorated with cute little pink tomato vines.

She stops eating her salad when she notices what is at the end of her fork: an olive. Sigh.

She looks around. This will never be her son’s wallpaper.

Edith takes off her headphones and takes out her cellphone.

EDITH
Hi, Planned Parenthood. I made an appointment, for a major procedure, I mean, the usual thing you do. And I'd like to postpone the procedure, and I'd like to know how long I can postpone it, if necessary.
(beat)
So, no later than January?

INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT
Kelvin is up on stage, working the microphone, berating the crowd to get on stage and sing. He has a bandage on his collarbone under his t-shirt.

He leaves the stage and heads to the bar. He sees Edith.
KELVIN
Hey, I remember you.

EDITH
I’m sure I stick out in this crowd.

KELVIN
I never forget a milf.

EDITH
Is that a compliment?

KELVIN
It isn’t not a compliment.

Edith bites her tongue. Kelvin moves behind the bar.

KELVIN (CONT’D)
What can I get you?

EDITH
Just a club soda.

KELVIN
Club soda? I didn’t take you for a singer.

EDITH
I’m not.

KELVIN
Well, there are two kinds of karaoke singers. The ones who do it to indulge their love of singing, and the kind we get here, who like to sing when they’re shitfaced. You aren’t here to drink or to sing, so there’s only one more possibility. You’re here to get laid.

EDITH
Oh, my god. You definitely don’t have a girlfriend.

KELVIN
Okay, you’re right. But not for lack of trying.

EDITH
What happened with that girl from that last time I was here?
KELVIN
Who, Madison? She’s not talking to me right now, but I’ll get that.

EDITH
Kelvin, can I tell you something?

KELVIN
How did you know my name was Kelvin?

EDITH
(thinking fast)
I heard it last week.
(her wisdom)
Some men choose the womb, and other men choose the whip.

KELVIN
What does that mean?

EDITH
That you may be confusing the pursuit of emotion with the real thing.

KELVIN
That’s me. Infatuation junkie. Is that so wrong?

EDITH
Not really. It just helps to know which kind you are. Acquiring new emotions always provides a high. But eventually you may be interested in what happens when you build something with your emotions.

KELVIN
That’s the womb?

EDITH
You don’t have any friends who move in with their girlfriends immediately, where spending time and taking care of each other is job one?

KELVIN
Yes, but then they usually stop coming out to bars, and I never see them anymore.
EDITH
Do you mind if I ask you a question?

KELVIN
Eight inches.

EDITH
(ignoring his answer)
How long have you been working here?

KELVIN
A year.

EDITH
Why did you pick this job?

KELVIN
I have three jobs, and I do them all part time. It’s easy to get off work if you’re just a minor participant.

EDITH
You’d prefer it if no one had to rely on you.

KELVIN
I didn’t say that.

EDITH
But you do have issues with commitment.

KELVIN
If I had commitment issues, would I have all these tattoos?

EDITH
Of course. Getting a tattoo takes some commitment, but keeping a tattoo doesn’t. It’s not like you have to draw it on every day.

KELVIN
(delighted)
But I do have one of those.

Kelvin pulls his T-shirt up to his shoulder, to reveal a clown head, with pointed collar, tattooed on his shoulder.
KELVIN (CONT’D)
See? I got it so you could draw a different clown body every time. He could be fat, or skinny, or have a dog body.

EDITH
How old were you when you came up with that?

KELVIN
That was just two months ago. The first one was here.

Kelvin pulls his shirt off to reveal an enormous word tattooed across his skinny chest in gothic letters: JETSAM.

EDITH
Okay.

KELVIN
Jetsam is the stuff that ends up floating on the sea after a shipwreck.

EDITH
Technically, that’s flotsam. Jetsam is the stuff you throw overboard in order to avoid sinking. Is that how you see yourself?

KELVIN
(not feeling insulted)
I guess so. It’s the name of one of my companies. Now, I shouldn’t even do this.

He starts peeling the bandage off his collarbone.

EDITH
I don’t need to see it.

He keeps peeling, revealing the letters CLA

KELVIN
But it’s the new guy.

He reveals a fresh tattoo: CLAVICLE!!! When Edith doesn’t laugh, Kelvin is confused.

EDITH
I don’t understand.
KELVIN
The clavicle is the name of your collarbone.

EDITH
I know what a clavicle is! I just mean...why would you...?
   (changing tack)
What is with all the exclamation points? Not just there. Why do people your age constantly overuse exclamation points?

KELVIN
People my age get excited? I probably need one just to get out of bed in the afternoon. Two means you’re really getting your wow on. And three means like, “Holy fuck, I’m getting a painful tattoo on my clavicle!!!” Don’t you ever get excited?

EDITH
I find it’s better in the long run to keep an even keel. Don’t freak out about victories or defeats. Just stay cool. Middle path.

KELVIN
You definitely don’t have a boyfriend.

Edith almost disagrees, but doesn’t. Kelvin is one person she isn’t lying to about Joaquin.

INT. ADOPTION AGENCY – DAY

Edith is meeting with a kind-looking AGENT (40’S) at an adoption agency. There are photos of smiling children adorning the walls.

ADOPTION AGENT
Miss Barraclough, thank you so much for coming in.

EDITH
Thank you for meeting on such short notice.
ADOPTION AGENT
This initial interview consists of some basic questions, and in no way is to be considered a commitment on your part. We will find you a family that is interested in adopting your child. They will commit to supporting you financially throughout the rest of your pregnancy, the medical bills involved in the birth, and for a reasonable post-natal period.

EDITH
So, I can take leave from my job?

ADOPTION AGENT
Yes, usually that takes place. It depends on the contract with the adoptive family, but most candidates are able to help.

EDITH
But they aren’t buying the baby.

ADOPTION AGENT
No, of course not. But any reasonable expenses can be considered part of the medical procedure, and are there to make you comfortable.

EDITH
How comfortable are we talking about?

ADOPTION AGENT
If you don’t mind my saying so, you appear to be an outstanding candidate. In cases like yours, twenty to twenty-five thousand dollars is a reasonable amount to expect.

EDITH
Wow. I wasn’t expecting that.

ADOPTION AGENT
If you’re ready to begin? This interview should take about fifteen minutes.

EDITH
Okay, shoot.
ADOPTION AGENT
Name and date of birth?

EDITH

ADOPTION AGENT
Name of the father?

EDITH
We aren’t together.

ADOPTION AGENT
Well, that may cause a consent issue.

EDITH
Actually, I conceived in vitro using a clinic.

ADOPTION AGENT
Oh. We don’t hear that a lot. So you don’t know the donor’s name?

EDITH
No. I know many things about him. I brought the folder. But no, it’s anonymous.

ADOPTION AGENT
You’ve changed your mind about keeping the child?

EDITH
Yes.

ADOPTION AGENT
Just so you know. When you enter into a contract with a family, we encourage the mother to be one hundred percent committed to the adoption process.

EDITH
I know.

ADOPTION AGENT
You may always back out. This has been known to happen in the hospital, and can be very difficult for all involved.
EDITH
I’m pretty sure this was a bad idea for me. There is no way I can imagine being a mother in this situation.

ADOPTION AGENT
Understood. Race of the mother?

EDITH
European-American.

ADOPTION AGENT
We’ll just say Caucasian. Race of the father?

EDITH
African-American.

The agent stops writing for a moment and immediately tries to conceal her surprise.

ADOPTION AGENT
(writing)
African...American.

Her look to Edith conveys a lot, but particularly sympathy.

EDITH
That doesn’t have anything to do with it.

ADOPTION AGENT
Of course it doesn’t.

EDITH
I’m not giving up the child because he is going to be biracial.

ADOPTION AGENT
Of course. But, I must inform you that the numbers work out a little differently.

EDITH
How so?

ADOPTION AGENT
The scale ends up...different. The numbers generally end up lower.
EDITH
Are you telling me that people spend less money to adopt biracial children?

The agent’s expression says “do I have to say it?”

EDITH (CONT’D)
Why?

ADOPTION AGENT
That’s just how it works. It may take a little longer to find a suitable set of parents, but I’m sure we can find someone.

EDITH
Wait, what?

ADOPTION AGENT
There are just many more African-American and biracial children out there, and much fewer Caucasian children. That’s just the way things work out.

EDITH
Are you talking supply and demand? My baby won’t be as popular?

ADOPTION AGENCY LADY
That’s just the way things work out.

INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT
The bar is packed. Lots of people drinking and dancing.
Edith tries to get Kelvin’s attention. He sees her.
They have to raise their voices above the crowd.

KELVIN
More questions?

EDITH
Just a couple.

KELVIN
I can’t do it now, we’re too slammed! Can you give me two hours?
EDITH
No! Don’t you get a break?

KELVIN
It’s ten-thirty! You at least have to tell me why.

EDITH
I’m a writer.

KELVIN
I thought you were a teacher.

EDITH
I teach creative writing, and I write short stories.

KELVIN
You don’t think you should commit to one career path?

EDITH
(ignoring him)
Anyway, I’m writing something, and I’m here for research.

KELVIN
Are you writing about karaoke?

EDITH
Yes, sort of.

KELVIN
Well, I can tell you everything you need to know. But...

EDITH
What?

KELVIN
You have to sing one first.

EDITH
Nope.

KELVIN
From what I’ve heard, you should write what you know.

Edith is caught. This is the kind of thing she tells her students.
EDITH
You don’t have any songs that I know.

KELVIN
Are you kidding? Modern karaoke technology gives you fifty thousand songs to choose from!

EDITH
Did you say fifty thousand?

KELVIN
You got it. Pick anything!

CUT TO:

INT. KARAOKE BAR - DAY

Edith sings Arlo Guthrie’s “Alice’s Restaurant,” a meandering twenty-three minute song that has more talking than singing. Which is good, as Edith can’t sing a lick.

EDITH
This song is called Alice's Restaurant, and it's about Alice, and the restaurant, but Alice's Restaurant is not the name of the restaurant, that's just the name of the song, and that's why I called the song Alice's Restaurant.

The crowd looks up. Who is this woman, and what is this crazy song?

EDITH (CONT’D)
(singing this part)
You can get anything you want at Alice's Restaurant

You can get anything you want at Alice's Restaurant

Walk right in it's around the back

Just a half a mile from the railroad track

You can get anything you want at Alice's Restaurant

Kelvin notices people starting to leave the bar, due to Edith’s screeching.
EDITH (CONT’D)
(back to talking)
Now it all started two
Thanksgivings ago, was on - two
years ago on Thanksgiving, when my
friend and I went up to visit Alice
at the restaurant, but Alice
doesn't live in the restaurant, she
lives in the church nearby the
restaurant, in the bell-tower, with
her husband Ray and Fasha the dog.
And livin' in the bell tower like
that, they got a lot of room
downstairs where the pews used to
be in...

CUT TO:

INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Now the bar is dead, and Kelvin is sitting down with Edith.
Her singing has cleared the room.

KELVIN
So what’s your story about?

EDITH
I’d rather not say. Bad luck. Okay,
Kelvin. My big question: what do
you want?

KELVIN
What do you mean, like a car?

EDITH
You don’t have a car?

KELVIN
I ride a bike. Is that a problem?

EDITH
No, I should have guessed. I mean,
what do you want out of life? How
do you see your future?

KELVIN
(thinking it through)
Well, I’ll be single, and I’ll have
a thriving Internet business that I
can do in a few hours a week.

EDITH
So you own a business.
KELVIN
I don’t like it when you say it like that. Maybe I’m an inventor. I tinker around in my garage, which I rent, and invent things, which I sell for lots of money, which I live off of, and travel the world.

EDITH
So shouldn’t you go back to school?

KELVIN
I learned what I wanted. I didn’t want to have to take all those writing classes, humanities, all that crap.

EDITH
Crap, huh? You’re already a good enough writer?

KELVIN
I just don’t think it’s that big a deal. I don’t care for the structure. It’s asphyxiating. And I don’t think it’s that important to have the initials after your name.

EDITH
But don’t you plan to go back?

KELVIN
No, why? Should I?

EDITH
Yes, you should follow through on the things you start. And the older you get the harder it is to do things like college. And if you want to study engineering...

KELVIN
And why am I studying engineering?

EDITH
You want to invent things.

KELVIN
I could invent a new drink. Like, this is the French Quarter. All anybody every drank around here were Hurricanes, Hurricanes, Hurricanes.

(MORE)
KELVIN (CONT'D)
Then someone invented the Hand Grenade. I could invent the next Hand Grenade.

EDITH
And that would make you rich? A recipe? Could you study chemistry?

KELVIN
I’m working on a lot of projects.

EDITH
Like what?

KELVIN
I’m trying to figure out how to make a glue stick with mayonnaise.

EDITH
(pardon me)
Again?

KELVIN
It looks like a glue stick, but you just rub it on toast or something and it spreads the mayo. You don’t need a knife.

EDITH
But they have plastic bottles that squirt.

KELVIN
But you still need the knife to spread it.

EDITH
Next?

KELVIN
What does this have to do with karaoke?

EDITH
I sang for you. You said I could ask you anything. What else are you working on?

KELVIN
A combination paper shredder hamster cage. You feed the documents in and the hamsters immediately put it to use.
EDITH
You think there’s a big market for rodent-based office supplies?

KELVIN
I’m working on a brassiere that uses the weight of large breasts to create electrical energy in a power cell. The more they bounce, the more energy they create.

EDITH
I bet it would work really well on cheerleaders.

KELVIN
That’s where I got the idea.

EDITH
What must your apartment look like?

KELVIN
You want to see it?

EDITH
Yes. Yes I do.

KELVIN
Then let’s get out of here. How do you want to do this?

EDITH
What?

KELVIN
(suggesting his bike)
I can double you?

EDITH
I have a car.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT
Edith’s Toyota pulls up in front of a darkened, dilapidated office building. Edith and Kelvin get out. She pops the trunk and he removes his bicycle and wheels it toward the building.

EDITH
Wait, you live here?

KELVIN
Yeah.
EDITH
Is it converted to residential?

KELVIN
Not exactly.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT
Edith and Kelvin are alone in the elevator. Kelvin is holding his bicycle by the handlebars vertically.

KELVIN
I figured it out a few years back. There was a shortage of residential units and a surplus of dilapidated office buildings. So I just moved in.

EDITH
How long have you lived here?

KELVIN
Two years.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT
The elevator doors open. Kelvin and Edith walk down the hall.

EDITH
Where do you go to the bathroom?

KELVIN
The men's room.
    (pointing)
Right there?

EDITH
(incredulous)
But...where do you bathe?

KELVIN
The gym? Three blocks away. Keeps me fit.

They get to his door, which reads JETSAM ENTERPRISES.

EDITH
And the building managers have never suspected anything?

Kelvin unlocks the door and opens it narrowly.
KELVIN
I have a cat.

INT. KELVIN’S OFFICE – NIGHT

It looks like the lair of a hoarder with multiple personality disorder. Broken equipment, half-finished projects.

KELVIN
It’s the maid’s day off. Can I make you a cocktail? Non-toxic, of course.

EDITH
Sure.

Kelvin moves to the kitchen area: a tabletop with hot plate, kettle, etc. A pony fridge sits on the floor.

EDITH (CONT’D)
Can you actually cook in there, or do you eat at the gym?

KELVIN
I probably shouldn’t tell you this, but I made dinner for Madison the other night.

EDITH
Of course you can tell me that. So things are going well?

KELVIN
She tagged me out at third base, but I’m getting there.

EDITH
You probably shouldn’t tell me that.

He arrives with her “cocktail.”

KELVIN
Here you go. It’s a Shirley Temple with tomato juice.

EDITH
What do you call it, a Bloody Temple?

KELVIN
Oh, that’s good. I’ve been calling it a Carrie White.
EDITH
Like Stephen King’s Carrie?

She sips and grimaces.

KELVIN
Too tangy? It’s supposed to feel like when a teenaged girl gets her first Shark Week.

Edith stares. Did he really just say that?

KELVIN (CONT’D)
So, let’s get down to business.

Kelvin makes himself comfortable on the old couch he and Edith are sharing.

KELVIN (CONT’D)
You aren’t writing an article about karaoke.

EDITH
Guilty.

KELVIN
You like younger guys?

EDITH
What? No. I’m writing a short story about a guy like you.

Kelvin’s look suggests he thought she was here for a hook-up.

KELVIN
What is a guy like me?

EDITH
Young with a future full of possibilities, trying to figure out which path to choose.

KELVIN
And you would come back to my apartment just to get the story?

EDITH
Sure. Now, what’s the longest time you’ve ever been with a woman?

KELVIN
(thinking)
Probably about seven hours, but we took breaks.
EDITH
I’m talking about a relationship.

KELVIN
I guess I knew that. Six months?

EDITH
What’s the shortest?

KELVIN
(you don’t want to know)
Pretty short.

EDITH
Who ends them?

KELVIN
The girl, usually.

EDITH
You say you’ve had a lot of jobs.
What’s the longest time you’ve ever kept one job?

KELVIN
Probably this one?

EDITH
What’s the shortest you’ve ever held a job?

KELVIN
I mean, I’ve quit internships in like half an hour. Best to nip that shit in the bud.

EDITH
Have you ever lied to get a job?

KELVIN
Probably.

EDITH
Like when?

KELVIN
You know, made up references, said I had skills I didn’t have, made my address look residential.

EDITH
Can you think of anything specific?

We know what she’s asking about.
KELVIN
No, not at this time.

EDITH
Have you ever been arrested?

KELVIN
Yes. Trespassing. In a church. With my friends. And playing paintball.

EDITH
What’s the strangest job you’ve ever had? Where you were like “What a way to make a living?”

KELVIN
I braided a dude’s beard. Fifty bucks. Dragon breath. Got that one on Craigslist.

EDITH
Did you ever have a job that pushed the limits, where you thought, “this is getting personal?”

KELVIN
Don’t know. I wouldn’t do porn, I don’t think.

EDITH
Good, good.

KELVIN
The wage disparity is off the chart.

EDITH
Wait, what?

KELVIN
Men get paid a tenth of what women do, and often they do much more of the work.

EDITH
That’s what you think about when you watch porn?

KELVIN
Not usually, no.

EDITH
What do you think about when you’re masturbating?
KELVIN
Really?

EDITH
Yes, if you can.

KELVIN
Japanese girls making out with each other.
(off her reaction)
You asked.

EDITH
Sorry.

KELVIN
I like to think about two young girls who don't really have any experience with men or sex or anything, they just have this burning need to kiss each other. Maybe they're practicing. I'm not sure what they're doing.

EDITH
And they just kiss? That's as far as it goes?

KELVIN
Well, they kiss for a while, and then I'm generally done. I'm no model of restraint.

EDITH
See? You can be goal-oriented.

KELVIN
What's the weirdest thing you ever did to research a story?

EDITH
Hmmm...one time, I went to therapy as somebody else.

KELVIN
What?

EDITH
I told the therapist all of my character's problems, all the things that had happened to her. And then figured out what my condition was.
(off his reaction)
(MORE)
I hated my mother. My character hated her mother.

KELVIN
I can think of the stupidest thing I ever did for money.

EDITH
Okay, what’s that?

KELVIN
I ate money.

That wasn’t what she expected him to say.

EDITH
Uh...

KELVIN
In third grade, this kid said he’d pay me five dollars if I could eat forty-one cents. First the dime, then the penny, then the nickel, and then the quarter.

EDITH
(disgusted)
But money is the dirtiest thing there is.

KELVIN
I was eight. I almost threw up, but I convinced myself I was supposed to do it.

EDITH
I wouldn’t put it past you. I saw the way you handled that platter of habaneros.

KELVIN
What?

EDITH
The first time I was in your bar. That bar bet where you ate all the peppers. You mopped the floor with that frat boy. And he looked like he was from Texas.

KELVIN
I actually hate hot peppers.
EDITH
Then what were you doing in a hot pepper eating contest?

KELVIN
Uh, winning a hundred dollars?

EDITH
But, how could you stand it?

Kelvin, inspired, goes to his fridge and pulls out a jar, which he unscrews.

KELVIN
Have you ever heard of miracle fruit?

EDITH
No.

Kelvin shows her a handful of berries.

KELVIN
*Synsepalum dulcificum*. These berries were originally discovered in West Africa.

EDITH
Why are they called miracle fruits?

KELVIN
Let me show you.

Kelvin goes to his kitchen as Edith contemplates the berries. He comes back with a lemon, which he cuts in half on a cutting board.

Demonstrating, he eats one of the miracle fruits. He looks at Edith: so what, right? Then he takes the lemon half and sticks it in his mouth, tearing the flesh from the skin, chewing and swallowing it without any sourness.

EDITH
It doesn't taste sour?

KELVIN
That's the miracle. Here, you try.

Edith eats one of the berries, then consumes the lemon, just as Kelvin has. A spectrum of emotions radiates across her face: surprise, pleasure. As she chews...
Isn't that strange? The berry doesn't taste like much, but it has this insane aftereffect. It takes the worst out of anything. You could eat pickles, Limburger, anything.

Edith swallows and smiles. A moment of inspiration. This revelation has made Edith approve of Kelvin. She has found her guiding metaphor.

She kisses Kelvin hard, placing her hand behind his head.

He is clearly surprised, but kisses back, as best he can. They separate, coming up for air.

I should put on some music.

No, I think I should go.

Are you kidding? Where do you have to go.

I'm sorry, Kelvin. You've been great. I got what I came for.

What the hell does that mean? You're really going? This was about to get good.

Edith has her purse and has made it to the door.

Edith is already moving down the hallway to the elevator.

But Edith? We'll never know what could have happened!

I think I can live with that.

Off of Kelvin, confused by her sudden departure.
INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT


This instrumental version of Edith’s Tomatina soundtrack returns as she re-imagines her story on the ride down.

AFRICAN VOICE
My dearest Edith: How long has it been since we walked the streets of Madrid together.

INT. EDITH’S CAR - NIGHT

She drives home, in full reverie.

AFRICAN VOICE
It seems like a long time ago, but if I close my eyes, we are there together.

EXT. WEST AFRICAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

A HANDSOME WEST AFRICAN MAN (40) walks along a scenic mountain ridge. This is his voice over.

AFRICAN VOICE
I'm back on my family's miracle fruit orchard. My family can’t wait to meet you.

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Edith is writing this down in her notebook, her rough draft. She catches herself.

AFRICAN VOICE
I'm back on my family's miracle fruit orchard. I only wish my family were still alive, so they could meet you, and our son.

She nods. Better.

EXT. MIRACLE FRUIT FARM - DAY

The handsome African is harvesting berries in a botanical setting.
AFRICAN VOICE
But as you know, I am the last of my family line.

He takes one berry and places it in his mouth.

INT. EDITH’S HOUSE – DAY
Edith places a miracle berry in her mouth as she writes. A bowl of them sits at her side, a bowl of lemons on her other side.

AFRICAN VOICE
These berries remind me of you, because our love has sweetened everything that comes after it.

She stops: too much?

EXT. WEST AFRICAN COUNTRYSIDE – DAY
The African man harvests berries near a dangerous looking cliff.

AFRICAN VOICE
I hope to come visit next year, after the spring planting. But there are many dangers in this part of the world. Who can say what may happen?

INT. EDITH’S HOUSE – NIGHT
Now Edith is transcribing her notes into this man’s handwriting.

AFRICAN VOICE
I am joyous that our love has borne fruit. Forever yours, Joaquin...Estragon...Egejuru.

She stops, folds the letter into one of the envelopes she got from Spain. She places an African stamp in the corner of the envelope.

There are other envelopes on the desk: the complete story.

Behind her, we see that she has re-papered the baby’s room, in African batik style. Blue, for a boy.
INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Franklin, last semester’s trouble student, reads a short story to another circular workshop.

FRANKLIN
“The Christmas tree looked metallic and cheap, with blinking lights, the kind of lights that looked like the kind of place where drunk horny moths might go late at night for anonymous sex. Yes, that was it. Dad was trying to save money this year, and he proved it by erecting a meat market for moths.”

Edith looks pleased, for once. Franklin braces himself.

EDITH
“A meat market for moths.” That’s great. How many drafts did that take to come to you?

FRANKLIN
Right away. I was just staring at my parents’ Christmas tree and it just came to me. You like it?

EDITH
Yes, very much. Sometimes the first ideas are the best.

FRANKLIN
What should I do next?

EDITH
It’s done. Send it out. Start another one.

Franklin smiles. Edith checks her watch: eleven-thirty.

EDITH (CONT’D)
That’s it.

The class adjourns.
INT. CAFE - DAY.

Mabel and Edith are meeting for one of their lunches. The restaurant is decked out in Christmas decorations. Edith is dressed in black, and looks somber.

MABEL
Okay, you have to tell me what’s wrong.

EDITH
It’s Joaquin. He’s gone.

MABEL
I don’t understand. When did he get here?

EDITH
He was never here. He never could make it to visit. He was waiting for the delivery. He’s passed on.

MABEL
He’s dead?
(off her nod)
What happened?

EDITH
He fell off a cliff. He was harvesting berries, and he fell.

MABEL
Berries? I thought he was a tomato farmer.

EDITH
Yes, one side of his family grew tomatoes. But the other side grows miracle berries. Have you heard of miracle berries?

MABEL
(not caring about berries)
When is the funeral?

EDITH
Um, Tuesday, I think.

MABEL
You can’t go?

EDITH
No, it’s in Gabon, that’s a five thousand dollar flight.
MABEL

Gabon?

EDITH

Yes, it’s a republic in West Africa.

MABEL

I know that. I thought you said he was Spanish?

EDITH

I met him there. But his family is African.

MABEL

But he isn’t Black, is he?

EDITH

Yes, he is. Was.

MABEL

I’m sorry, I didn’t know that.

EDITH

I don’t think it’s that important.

MABEL

I don’t either. But you showed me a photograph?

EDITH

Yes, he photographs lighter than he really is. He did, I mean.

MABEL

You seem to be taking it well.

EDITH

(concealing worry)

I do? I guess, I never knew him that well.

Mabel gives her a hug, which Edith returns in kind. But the deception of it plays on her face.

EXT. GARDEN – DAY

Edith is planting seeds in her community garden patch. Looks like she’s finally cleared it all up.
EXT. CHINATOWN CITY STREET - DAY

A Chinese New Year’s celebration is in effect. They are
ringing in the Year of the Rabbit.

Title: SIX WEEKS LATER

INT. EDITH’S OFFICE - DAY

Edith is sitting behind her orderly desk, reading one of
Mabel’s poems aloud.

EDITH
MP3. MP3. The M is for Moving. The
P is for Picture.
The three is for persistence. The
third try. The grandchild of a
soundman’s ambition.
LP. LP. L for Long, P for Playing.
The LP is warm, but it can’t run
through the park. A cassette brings
its hiss.
MP3. MP3. It isn’t warm, this MP.
It can run, this MP. But how can it
be lossless? How can any of us
pretend to be lossless?
Mozart played for kings. Now he
hides in my phone.

Edith looks up from her reading. And sees Kelvin in her
doorway, dressed for cold weather, in coat and scarf.

KELVIN
Hey.

Edith is shocked. He stays in the doorway, she behind her
desk.

EDITH
What are you doing here?

KELVIN
You can come bother me at my job,
and I can’t do the same for you?

EDITH
I never told you my last name.

KELVIN
I found that short story you told
me about, about the girl who hated
her mother? Wasn’t hard from there.
EDITH
Well, it’s nice to see you. But–

KELVIN
(interrupting)
I know you probably didn’t want to see me again. I just wanted to know if you ever finished that story about me.

EDITH
I couldn’t finish it. It just went nowhere. That happens sometimes.

KELVIN
I have to say something. You asked me what I think about when I’m masturbating.

EDITH
Kelvin–

KELVIN
No, let me finish. I’ve been trying to pay more attention to that since we last talked. It turns out that I think about you when I masturbate.

EDITH
God–

KELVIN
And not making out with Japanese girls or bondage fantasies or anything. Just you. I think about you and me.

EDITH
That’s nice of you to say.

KELVIN
And I masturbate a lot. I know you don’t want to give me a chance.

Kelvin removes his scarf. His neck tattoo is gone.

KELVIN (CONT’D)
I got rid of it. I don’t need Princess Leia to fuck a droid to let the world know I’m my own man. But I do need you to give me a chance. I want to choose the womb.
Reveal that Mabel has been sitting in Edith’s office this whole time. She was there to talk about her poetry. She was sitting inside the door, where Kelvin can’t see.

EDITH
Kelvin, this is my friend Mabel.

Mabel gets up to leave.

MABEL
Charmed, I’m sure.

KELVIN
Oh. Nice to meet you, ma’am.

Mabel shakes his hand as she moves out the door.

MABEL
(you’re a masturbator)
Firm grip.
(to Edith)
We’ll talk later?

Edith nods, and she is alone with Kelvin.

EDITH
What happened to Madison?

KELVIN
I feel like we had to sleep with each other to find out that we didn’t like each other.

EDITH
Maybe if you gave it more time...

KELVIN
I quit the bar. You were right about me. I’ve been all over the road. I want to focus on something that can change my life. I’m designing a sustainable gym that harnesses the energy of the people working out to keep the lights on and heat the showers and sauna.

EDITH
That sounds like a very good idea.

KELVIN
I’m not going to be jetsam any more. So, will you give me a chance?
EDITH
You are one of the most interesting people I’ve ever met. That isn’t a euphemism. You have so much intellect and energy. You could be successful in so many ways, and right now I can only wonder which of them will provide your path. Imagination and logic don’t always go together, but they do in you. And you probably don’t need to hear this from me, but you’re very handsome.

He smiles: this is going well.

EDITH (CONT’D)
But we do not have a future together.

KELVIN
Why not?

EDITH
I’m old enough to be your mother.

KELVIN
I knew that before I rode over here. That isn’t a good enough reason.

Edith stands, with some difficulty. We see for the first time that she is now five months pregnant. Kelvin’s eyes widen.

KELVIN (CONT’D)
Uh...

He takes a moment to compose himself.

KELVIN (CONT’D)
That looks like four months?

EDITH
Five.

KELVIN
So, I guess there’s someone else.

EDITH
No.

KELVIN
But there was.
KELVIN (CONT’D)
Well, maybe you aren't seeing
anyone right now, but whose baby is
that?

EDITH
Yours.

KELVIN
Very funny.

EDITH
I'm carrying your child.

KELVIN
Immaculate conception, eh?

EDITH
No, I got pregnant at a fertility
clinic, using your sperm.

Kelvin exhibits a range of emotions, from disbelief to shock,
rage, acceptance. It all clicks.

KELVIN
I needed the money for concert
tickets.

EDITH
That's flattering.

KELVIN
I needed money for tickets to see
Jay-Z and Kanye, Watch the Throne
tour. My friends joked about
selling our bodily fluids. But you
can only sell plasma once a month.
We went to a fertility clinic in
Lafayette. But I was the only one
who passed the test. One of my
friends didn't have a high enough
IQ, and the other had a history of
asthma. I went in on several
occasions, until they told me they
had enough of me. And, if you must
know, I was probably thinking about
Ashley, a girl at the gym, and her
perfect, pear-shaped ass. I used to
jog on the treadmill right behind
her when she was using the
Stairmaster. And I used to imagine
that I was running up her ass.
EDITH
Thanks.

KELVIN
They promised me no one would ever know.

EDITH
They didn't but, you were on Facebook...I can explain. It was an accident.

KELVIN
What do you mean?

EDITH
I didn't order you. I didn't know if I wanted to have your child-

Kelvin backs out into the hallway. Edith follows him.

KELVIN
Stop saying that!

INT. HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS.
Kelvin is backing away. This isn’t at all what he expected to happen.

EDITH
-I'm sorry. I ordered something different, and there was a mix-up at the clinic, and I could have had a free abortion, but I didn't want an abortion, I wanted to know what my baby would be like. And I just needed to get to know you, so I could relax.

KELVIN
So, you're not writing a story about me?

EDITH
No.

KELVIN
And you weren’t trying to fuck me?

EDITH
No.
KELVIN
Do you suppose I could buy back my introduction to you?

EDITH
Yes, you can.

Kelvin leaves. Edith watches him walk down the hallway. As he leaves earshot.

EDITH (CONT’D)
(to herself)
But I can't.

Edith turns to walk back into her office and sees Marcus standing in the door of his office. How much did he hear?

MARCUS
So it’s because I’m too old?

Edith rolls her eyes and moves back into her office...

INT. EDITH’S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS
...starting her ranting the moment she slams the door.

EDITH
No, it isn’t because you’re too old, or too fat, or too black. It isn’t because I’m dating a Spanish guy, or an African guy, or a tattooed bartender half my age. It isn’t even because I’m pregnant. It’s because...

She’s stumped.

EDITH (CONT’D)
It’s because...

She stops. Why is it, again?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Edith opens her office door and walks back to Marcus who is inside his office.

EDITH
All right. I’m single.

Marcus wasn’t expecting this.
EDITH (CONT’D)
Do you want to go out on a date with me sometime?

MARCUS
Uh, sure.

EDITH
Fine!

Edith moves back into her office and slams the door again.

INT. MABEL’S OFFICE – DAY
We join Edith in mid-conversation with Mabel.

EDITH
I’m sorry I lied to you. But I can explain.

MABEL
I knew you were making it up. No straight man would ever say his favorite book is Middlemarch.

EDITH
I just wanted to have a child. I would like to be married, sure. But it wasn’t happening on the right timeline. And doing it the way I did, seems so impersonal. And I wanted her to feel like she was the product of love.

MABEL
She will be. Your love.

EDITH
It’s a he now, but thanks.

MABEL
How long were you going to stick with your African Spaniard story? Till he was grown?

EDITH
I don’t know.

MABEL
What about the internet? What about DNA? Don’t you watch CSI? Edith, you can’t treat your children like your novel!
EDITH
I know. I know.

MABEL
In four months you’re going to publish your first draft.

EDITH
He’s not a novel, I get it.

MABEL
He’s going to be more like a play. And not on Broadway. When you have a baby, it’s like you’re workshopping off-Broadway.

EDITH
(amused)
Off Broadway?

MABEL
Off-off. Like Connecticut. Then you have a long time to make mistakes, learn what works, what doesn’t. People won’t have any idea if you’re a bad mom till much later.

EDITH
I had no idea you knew so much about playwriting.

MABEL
I taught it one summer when Greg got pneumonia. I was horrible at it. Made me feel better about not having kids.

EDITH
(I feel better)
Thanks.

MABEL
How are you going to tell your mother?

Edith contemplates this. She hasn’t figured this one out.

EDITH
Can’t I just call her from Connecticut?
INT. EDITH’S PARENTS’ HOUSE - NIGHT.

Edith is sitting at a well-appointed table with her parents. ALAN (65) is older and balder than the young man from that hippie coffee shop. NANCY (65) is older but well-preserved. One look at her judgmental gaze explains a lot about Edith.

Edith has just broken the news.

NANCY
So there’s no Joaquin?

EDITH
No.

NANCY
And you aren’t getting married?

EDITH
No time soon.

NANCY
You’re doing it all by yourself?

EDITH
With a donor, but yes.

NANCY
It seems so extreme. I would have given you that chest anyway.

EDITH
Mom, take me seriously. I wanted my son to believe that the way his parents got together was special.

Nancy steals a glance at Alan, who isn’t making eye contact.

EDITH (CONT’D)
Like the way you met Dad during Hurricane Edith.

NANCY
We had actually been going out for a few weeks.

EDITH
What?

NANCY
We met through mutual friends.

EDITH
Are you kidding?
NANCY
We didn't want a child, and the condom broke, and he asked his boss for a raise, and we got it. Otherwise, who knows what would have happened.

Edith doesn’t know what to say.

NANCY (CONT’D)
Now, is there anything else we need to know about your Spanish child, or can we have ice cream?

EDITH
(as quick as she can)
My donor is Black. My son is biracial. I didn’t plan it that way, but I’m fine with it and I hope you are too.

Nancy wasn’t expecting this, but processes it quickly.

NANCY
Now can we have ice cream?

Nancy moves to the kitchen. Her dad, not a talker, speaks up.

ALAN
Well, I know one thing.

EDITH
What's that, Dad?

DAD
That kid's probably going to lose his hair.

Nancy returns with three bowls of ice cream and places one in front of Edith. Hers has two scoops: chocolate and vanilla.

NANCY
I know how you like options.

She looks up to see her mother smiling. Everything is fine.

INT. EDITH’S HOUSE – BABY’S ROOM

Edith is sitting in her old office/baby room. Her laptop is out, and she starts typing. Her story is entitled WOLF PEACH.
EDITH
(v.o.)
Joaquin spent the first hour of his date with Anna trying to convince her, in his broken English, that Florida was a series of islands.

As she types, we slowly RACK FOCUS toward the back wall.

EDITH (CONT’D)
She spent her share of the hour trying to convince him that they weren’t on a date at all. Three drinks in a flamenco bar at midnight doesn’t count as a date in Madrid. Spaniards call that lunch.

Where the wallpaper was pink, it is now blue, and where the daughter’s name “Rosa” was painted, there is a boy’s name:

REUBEN!!!

With three exclamation points.

FADE TO BLACK (though the name stays long enough to become the film’s final image).

CREDITS.
VITA

Henry Griffin was born in 1969 in New York City, and has resided in New Orleans principally since 1980. He graduated from Loyola University with a B.A. in English in 1992. He became a professional screenwriter in 1996 after selling the option on his first screenplay, *Rock Scissors Paper*. He is the author of twelve original screenplays. He has also directed several award-winning films, including *Mutiny* (1999) and *Tortured by Joy* (2004). He has acted in several films and television shows, most notably *The Way of the Gun* (2000) and the HBO series *Treme* (2009-2013), on which he is a series regular. He has served as an artist-in-residence at UNO since 2007.