UNCANNY

Written by

Lauren Delisle

laurendelisle.scwr@gmail.com
(847) 529 7008

INT. BLACK BOX THEATER - EARLY EVENING

Actors rehearse - an amoeba of eccentricity and nerves.

Some of them wear headphones, deep breathing like they're in a Lamaze class. Others pace, rehearsing lines from a script. They're each in their own worlds, preparing for an audition.

The backstage door BURSTS open. A frazzled but commanding FELICITY FINK (40s) with FRIZZY BLONDE HAIR steps into the room, scanning her clipboard.

FELICITY
Shay Turner.

She glances around the room at the actors, who themselves seem to be searching for the missing person.

FELICITY (CONT'D)
(perturbed)
SHAY TURNER!

A door at the opposite end of the room OPENS.

A gorgeous-but-disheveled SHAY TURNER (29), Black, with coiled hair that bounces with her as she moves, slips in.

SHAY
I'm here.

The actors watch Shay cross the room.

Shay's phone buzzes in her pocket.

She discreetly glances down at it: incoming call from NINA MADDEN. She ignores it, turns on *Do Not Disturb*. NOT NOW.

FELICITY
This way, please.

As Shay exits with Felicity, actors look at one another.

ACTORS
- *She's* auditioning for this?
- I thought Cuban was her genre!
- Bridget, you can't say that!

CUT TO:

INT. BROADWAY THEATER - MOMENTS LATER

Shay creeps across the dark stage. The mysterious cracks and shifts of a mostly-empty auditorium punctuate her aloneness.

Felicity sits beside TWO JUDGES sit in darkness some ten rows into the stalls and hands them copies of Shay's headshot.

A spotlight clicks on, illuminating Shay. She stands before a tall wooden door - the only set piece sharing stage with her. Shay bows her head and takes a deep breath.

The white spotlight softens to purple.

FELICITY
When you're ready!

A moment. THEN, Shay whistles a tune. Touches the door.

SHAY
(singing)
I used to think when I heard music, you would hear it, too. Now I can't help but hate to hope you know I think of you. I can't help but hate to hope I'm not the same as you.

One of the judges leans close to the other.

JUDGE 1
(whispering)
This one's solid.

Shay walks to center stage.

SHAY
(still singing)
I know it's better I don't see her at her worst. And if it were: she's better, I know it would be a first.

Shay looks back toward the door. Her body sinks into itself.

SHAY (CONT'D)
(declaring)
She's not home. So that's it.

Shay looks out across the stalls toward the judges.

The sound of SHATTERING. The auditorium cracks down the middle, like a piece of glass.

Haunted, Shay stumbles back, into the:

INT. HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

A YOUNGER SHAY (20) with shorter, more tightly coiled hair and raggedy clothing steadies herself against the wall of a hallway with faded floral wallpaper.

The glass of the window beside her is shattered. Stray shards on Shay's sleeves and shoes suggest she entered through it.

SHAY
(trembling)
Mom?!

Shay moves down the hall toward the bathroom, tries the knob. Locked. She knocks frantically.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BROADWAY THEATER

Shay knocks at the door, more urgently now.

SHAY
Mom! Open up. Please! It's me.

Shay grows frantic. Forces the door open with a SHOVE. She falls to the floor. *This is more than an act.*

One judge leans in towards the other.

JUDGE 2
Was that in the script?

Judge 1 shakes their head, concerned but transfixed.

Shay stares into space, tears streaming from her eyes.

SHAY
(frantic)
I didn't mean what I said. I take it back! God, I take it back--

FELICITY FNK
-Line was "I never should have come," sweetheart.

Jolted from her traumatic memory, Shay stiffens, rising to her feet. She faces the judges awkwardly, then bolts out.

The judges exchange glances.

JUDGE 1
Really had high hopes for that one.

ACT ONE

INT. BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Shay rushes through a group of actors seated in the wings.

The looks on their faces say it all: *what the hell just happened to you out there?* Whispers and glances. And then someone who knows her...

The FIGURE waves. But Shay's in flight-mode. She dashes to:

EXT. THEATER - MOMENTS LATER

Shay vomits in the alley beside a dumpster. A nearby deli sign casts a glow on her face in the twilight.

ANTONIO CRUCES (32), a chain-smoking tenor with perfect pitch emerges from the building. No one Shay wants to see.

ANTONIO
Shit, babe. I haven't seen you like that since the closing night of "On Your Feet." You good?

Shay wipes her mouth with her sleeve. Glares at him.

Antonio holds his hands up in surrender. He heads back toward the backstage door, but before he leaves her--

ANTONIO (CONT'D)
-Come to Diablo's tonight. You look like you can use a drink. Might be a producer you can meet, too.

Shay offers a reluctant half-smile. Antonio leaves her.

Alone in the alley, Shay breathes deep, staring down at her trembling hands. An ambulance siren blares. Shay glances toward the street. *Was that real or imagined?*

INT. APARTMENT STAIRWELL - LATER THAT NIGHT

Shay makes her way up a crowded stairwell.

A deep trance house beat pulses through the cramped space.

Lingering nerves from her audition-gone-wrong, Shay can HEAR her breath in her ears. She holds the rail to steady herself.

Everywhere: Bushwick 20-somethings with glitter on their faces, eyebrow and lip piercings, cybersigilism tattoos. Some take flash photos of one another. There is alcohol at this party, but ketamine and coke are the drugs of the hour.

A cloud of smoke fills the air. Shay steps to evade it. She cranes her neck to get a view of the landing and sees:

INT. STUDIO LOFT - CONTINUOUS

SHAY'S POV: Antonio gesticulates wildly at the center of his friend group. They sit on Moroccan floor poufs, in a space that looks like a rich guy bought it and a hippie decorated.

ANTONIO
Danesh is friends with Mo, who casted Book of Mormon. Hijo de puta! He'll be here any second.

A mousy girl JARVIS (23), fresh out of NYU with a well-performing Only Fans to prove it, spots Shay.

JARVIS
Oh my god! Shay! It's been so long.

Jarvis rushes over, pulls Shay into a one-sided embrace, and corrals Shay toward the circle.

JARVIS (CONT'D)
Shay and I were in "On Your Feet" together! She played Rebecca Fajardo...for four whole contracts.

Jarvis was an extra in the show. For one contract.

SHAY
It was three.

Jarvis doesn't hear that. A resounding enthusiastic mumble from the group. Someone tosses a Moroccan pouf towards Shay.

She arranges and sits on it uncomfortably, pretends to pick at a stray thread on her jacket, evading connection with any one person. She's in her head. Antonio resumes his rant.

ANTONIO
I met Danesh while training with John Fordham, for *As You Like It*. Son of a bitch practically got himself killed doing the choreo.

To Shay, his voice is miles away. A guy next to her with a septum piercing and a dyed-pink buzz cut ASHER (27) leans in.

ASHER
(whispering)
Yo, that was some gnarly shit earlier.

SHAY
Huh?

ASHER
The audition. We were in the wings.

SHAY
We?

ASHER
Yeah. We all auditioned.

Shay glances around the group. Several people stare at her, expressions of pity. Jarvis reaches over to Shay.

JARVIS
Don't worry, I don't think any of us are getting the part. Some nepo baby's dad just doubled the budget. We all know how that goes...

SHAY
Right. Uh, do you know where the bathroom is?

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Shay splashes water onto her face. Her pocket BUZZES.

CALL FROM: NINA MADDEN. A familiar name. Shay tenses.

SHAY
Damnit.

Shay ignores it. Puts her phone back in her pocket.

She exits into:

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - DAY

Squeezing her way through animated groups of people, Shay encounters a face she actually <u>wants</u> to see. It belongs to RAMON ITALDO (49), a Cuban man who looks like he's lived many lives in one. He looks around uncertainly.

SHAY
Ramon?

He peers up at her. An instant grin.

RAMON
My beautiful Rebecca Fajardo!

Ramon embraces her.

SHAY
Ramon, it's been four months. You can call me Shay now.

RAMON
(pleading)
Nonsense! Tonterías, hijo mío! I'm nostalgic. Can't I have this?

Shay nods, affectionately.

Ramon cups her face, stares into her eyes, worried.

RAMON (CONT'D)
Did you see the specialist I recommended?

Shay pulls away gently. Looks down.

SHAY
No.

RAMON
Shashandra B. Turner. Don't make me make you take care of yourself.

SHAY
It's busy looking for new work.

Ramon lets it go.

From the living room, vivacious cheers can be heard.

RAMON
You're still looking huh?
(beat, conspiring)
Well don't share this with the *vultures* in there, but I'm setting a new show in January. Auditions will start in a few weeks.

Hope in Shay's eyes. For the first time.

SHAY
Oh yeah? Think I've got a shot?

RAMON
(uncertain)
It's a tad serious-

SHAY
-No, that's exactly what I'm looking for. Ramon, please let me audition.

Ramon winks.

RAMON
I'll send the script when I get it. But Shay, really, please. Consider the number I gave you.

The advice falls on Shay like a wet blanket, the brief joy slipping from her eyes. Jarvis enters from the living room.

JARVIS
Ramon, you made it! Antonio was just about to take over on piano!

Shay eyes Ramon as if to say "Good luck with her."

A cursory glance to the living room is all Shay needs to know it's not her night. She opts for the stairwell instead.

As she descends, Antonio rushes over.

ANTONIO
Leaving already?! Producer's not even here yet, babe. Stay!

Sounds garble together as Shay glances down the stairwell toward the door. She glances back toward Antonio, as she passes through warm bodies of people and their substances. A ringing in her ear. *Shattering glass sound.*

Shay blinks and points at her watch.

SHAY
(shouting)
It's late.

INT. SUBWAY CART - LATE NIGHT

Silence, save the steady, metallic roar of the train gliding over the tracks. Shay rides alone. Down the cart: a frail UNHOUSED PERSON rocks back and forth, moaning. Shay notices.

The unhoused person SCREAMS, hitting their head against the wall of the subway cart violently.

Shattering glass. Knocking on door. Ambulance siren.

Shay squeezes her eyes shut, trembling.

When she opens them, she looks toward the unhoused person again. They appear completely normal. Rocking and moaning. No head trauma. It was just a hallucination.

Shay's phone buzzes. She checks it. 10:30pm.

3 missed calls from NINA MADDEN. Shay swipes the notification away, peers at the skyline of Manhattan out the window. The colorful speckles of light rearrange into:

INT. THEATER - DREAM

Shay smiles on stage before an adoring audience. A standing ovation. Shay bows. When she looks up, only one person stands in the audience clapping. Ostensibly: her MOTHER (40s).

Confused, she runs toward the figure, but it disintegrates like a trick of light when she reaches it.

The sound of a BEEPING TOW TRUCK.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - BEDSTUY, BROOKLYN - MORNING

Shay wakes in her tiny shoebox of an apartment, a tow truck BEEPING outside her window. She glances at the clock. 7:30am. She shuts the window and pads over to:

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Shay takes off her clothes, tucks her hair into a cap, and steps into the shower. She lathers soap onto her hands. A minute in, the water stops.

Shay adjusts the faucet to fix the problem. No luck.

Unenthused, she steps out of the shower, wraps a towel around herself, and heads out to:

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

She tiptoes to the door, leaving wet footprints on the hardwood. She slides her feet into slippers, grabs her house keys, and heads to the door. She stops in her tracks.

At her feet: a late water bill notice that's been shoved beneath the door crack. ***FINAL WARNING.***

Shay picks it up, exhales.

CUT TO:

INT. MANHATTAN HIGH RISE OFFICE - DAY

JOYCE PATASHI (36) swivels in an Eames mid back. The only Indian-American woman at her agency, Joyce has worked tenfold to be here. Usually, it's not obvious just how much this has thinned her patience. She holds her phone in her hand.

JOYCE
Send me your updated digitals. NOT the ones that make you look like the fucking Eunuch of Babylon.

Call ends. She swivels around. Shay's seated opposite her.

JOYCE (CONT'D)
You're late.

SHAY
I'm sorry. My water got cut off this morning and--

JOYCE
-then an origami knick knack stole my homework. I've heard 'em all. Tell me how the audition went.

Shay looks down, embarrassed, taking a seat before Joyce.

JOYCE (CONT'D)
Jesus, honey, that bad?

SHAY
It got weird mid-way through...It uh,...stopped feeling like me.

JOYCE
So it was a preparation issue? You not knowing the character?

Joyce pulls a vial of pills from her drawer, empties one onto her hand, and tosses it back. The sound triggers Shay.

SHAY
(disproportionately angry)
It's over now! Can we drop it?

Shay shifts, embarrassed. Joyce slides a playbill across her desk. “On Your Feet!” The Story of Emilio and Gloria Estefan.

JOYCE
Well. Now that’s off the table. I pulled some strings. They want to sign you for another contract.

SHAY
What?

Shay smiles softly, but her body sinks with defeat.

JOYCE
You’ve been down and out all summer! This is job-security. Where’s your enthusiasm?

SHAY
It’s great. Really. It’s just, Ramon’s spearheading a more serious work. I think...maybe that’s what I need right now...creatively.

Shay’s phone buzzes. NINA MADDEN. Shay dismisses the call. A TEXT comes in. Preview text: 9-1-1 EMERGENCY. YOUR AUNT...

Shay stands abruptly.

SHAY (CONT’D)
Can I think about it?

JOYCE
If by that you mean consider how <u>lucky</u> you are to have me as your agent? I need an answer by Monday.

SHAY
Thanks, Joyce.

Shay heads for the door.

JOYCE
Shay?

Shay turns back.

JOYCE (CONT’D)
Don’t forget that four years ago, you would’ve killed for this.

Off Shay, knowing that.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Shay holds her phone to her ear, paces. She's finally on the phone with Nina Madden. And it isn't sounding good.

NINA (O.S.)
Your Aunt Mabel had another incident. We told her eight months ago we needed to see compliance. The weekly check-ups aren't enough.

A boy ZOOMS past on a Lime scooter, nearly knocking Shay over. Discombobulated, she finds a public bench and sits.

SHAY
What are you saying?

NINA (O.S.)
Hearing's next Tuesday. The judge will decide if admission to a state facility is warranted--

SHAY
-She'd never agree to that.

NINA (O.S.)
There's a slim chance the judge allows her to keep living alone.

SHAY
So what then, Nina?

NINA (O.S.)
If you make the trip out, maybe you could aid her transition into a private psychiatric facility. It's...safer for someone like her.

SHAY
I can't leave New York.

NINA (O.S.)
(a little hurt)
Letting the state take custody <u>really</u> isn't ideal.

SHAY
But it's possible?

NINA (O.S.)
...Sure.

SHAY
I choose that. Okay, Nina? Is that everything? Are we squared away?

NINA (O.S.)
Look, if you could just come here--

Shay ends the call, leans over, on the verge of tears.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

DORIS SODAYGA (27), a Latina social worker, folds laundry. She wears simple clothing, her hair tied back into a loose ponytail. Her eyes search Shay's for understanding.

DORIS
I can't do it anymore. Your mom needs more help than I can give.

SHAY
Maybe she's past the point of saving.

Shay heads for the door where (surprise!) her mom stands. *Damn, she wasn't supposed to hear that.*

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - SAME AS BEFORE FLASHBACK

Shay rubs her face, pushing away the memory.

Across the sidewalk, a COLLEGE GIRL waves.

COLLEGE GIRL
Would you like to learn about the opioid crisis affecting our nation?

Not the time.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - EVENING

Shay sits at her kitchen counter, laptop before her, takeout bag to her left, and a 5-gallon jug of water to her right.

She picks at Thai food with chopsticks, scanning an article about Ramon Italdo's upcoming production *A Raisin in the Sun*.

It features a photo from an earlier production. Lena, a Black mother, holds her daughter Beneatha. Shay lingers on the photo. Picks her fingernail. Opens a new tab on her laptop.

She types: “State Psychiatric Care - Illinois”

MONTAGE of Shay on her laptop:

- Scanning headlines of abuse in state psychiatric clinics.
- “Higher mortality in state clinic patients, Data concludes”
- Google search “Low budget options for memory care, Midwest”
- Google search “Flights NYC to Chicago.”
- Shay falls asleep at her laptop.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - MORNING

Shay wakes panicked. Her eyes adjust to the morning light.

She touches on her laptop.

On the screen: a booked ticket to Chicago. Shay groans.

ACT TWO

INT. TOYOTA PRIUS - DAY

Shay sits in the backseat of an Uber, looking out the window.

Her view: oak trees, marshes, quaint fast food joints. Planned neighborhoods. Familiar sites of the Chicago suburbs.

A **Welcome to Darlington** sign.

A sweaty DRIVER in his 50s glances back at Shay.

Shay's gaze remains fixed out the window.

SHAY
It's that one. On the right.

A street sign reads: *Sycamore Street*. A moment later, the car pulls up outside a green-shuttered brick and cedar ranch.

INT. AUNT MABEL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Shay brings her bags to the front porch. Knocks on the door.

The twinkling of wind chimes, but no answer.

Concerned, Shay leaves her bag on the porch and walks to the side of the house. A sprinkler resounds from the backyard.

She follows it and wanders into:

EXT. AUNT MABEL'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

An overgrown expanse of green grass and wildflowers gives way to a single foot path that's been paved with stones.

It's beautiful, but unkempt.

SHAY
Aunt Mabel?...

An eerie quiet. Birds in the distance. Shay scans the yard.

SHAY (CONT'D)
Hello?

AUNT MABEL (68), a hurricane of a woman with a weathered face, wearing a long mumu, runs at Shay with a broom. Thick glasses make her hazy eyes appear bigger than they are.

Aunt Mabel stops in her tracks, recognizing Shay.

AUNT MABEL
Oh. I’m sorry dear. I thought you was Wilty.

SHAY
Who’s Wilty?

Aunt Mabel looks around paranoid.

She hushes Shay, who follows her into:

INT. AUNT MABEL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Aunt Mabel reaches for a Halloween cauldron and adds random items to it as she passes through the house. A horse figurine. A pack of Jelly Beans. A book on gardening.

Shay follows, trying to make sense of the stacked boxes and strange collections they weave around. A hoarder’s home.

AUNT MABEL
I tell you, I been tryin’ to read this for years. Just haven’t gotten around to it.

SHAY
Read what?

AUNT MABEL
Of course not. The gardening was hard enough without it.

SHAY
You’re reading about gardening?

AUNT MABEL
I swear, you Millenials. Always listening with your bad ear.

INT. AUNT MABEL’S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Shay passes the kitchen counter, where one of the gas stove burners has been left on. She rushes to it with an urgency and twists the knob to turn it off.

A cursory glance at the counter suggests this place hasn’t been cleaned in days. A manila folder rests beside an OPEN JAR OF PEANUT BUTTER. It drips from a knife. Concerning.

Shay notes bag from “Sammy’s Sandwich” and grabs it to use it as a trash receptacle for other stray kitchen items: a used plastic spork, an empty milk carton, the peanut butter.

Her eyes drift to the manila folder. A post-it on it reads: *Shay Turner*. Shay takes it, tries to catch up to her aunt.

SHAY
You didn't tell me Nina left information for me.

Aunt Mabel whips around, hurt, eyes the folder Shay holds.

AUNT MABEL
So that's all you came for? To shack me up somewhere? Can't nobody take Mabel from her home.

Shay pauses, more worried. They move into:

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

This is the same living room that was in Shay's flashback with Doris, in Act 1. She's definitely been here before.

SHAY
It's not that simple, Aunt Mabel.

Aunt Mabel ignores this, presses on, until they reach:

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The faded floral wallpaper is familiar. So is the window. Shay remembers that horrible evening all too well. *Shattering glass sound. Knocking on door. Ambulance sirens*.

AUNT MABEL
You bring me a sandwich?

Shay jolts, returning to the moment.

SHAY
Huh?

AUNT MABEL
Sammy's. How you know that's my spot? You bring me a sandwich?

Shay looks down at the Sammy's Sandwich bag she'd used to hold kitchen trash. She shakes her head, apologetic.

SHAY
Uh...no, I--

AUNT MABEL
-Well if you was good for somethin', you'd know my order is the Ham Sandwich.

SHAY
Okay--

AUNT MABEL
-Extra Mayo.

SHAY
Got it.

AUNT MABEL
No lettuce.

Aunt Mabel turns her head as though she's heard something. She wanders in its direction.

SHAY
Can I stay in Mom's room?

AUNT MABEL
(without looking back)
Make yourself at home, Izzy.

The name hits Shay like a ton of bricks. Her mom's name. She holds her breath until Aunt Mabel disappears into a different room. A long exhale. *This was more than she bargained for.*

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Shay sits on a full-sized bed with quilts layered over it and flips through the contents of the manila folder. Notes from Nina. Preparing for a hearing. Aunt Mabel's incident report.

The last one: a pamphlet to a <u>private memory care facility.</u>

Palatine Memory Care, Open to the public every day 9am - 4pm.

A corresponding enrollment form slips out from it. Shay checks the clock on the bedside table. 2:30. Still time.

EXT. PALATINE MEMORY CARE FACILITY - LATER

Shay gets out of an Uber. Her phone buzzes. A notification from Uber. *The charge for this ride failed to process. Please enter a new card.* Shay ignores the notification and walks towards a quaint brick building.

A statue of a little girl holding a basket that serves as a bird bath decorates the small front lawn.

An OLD MAN drops his trousers and pees inside it.

A NURSE rushes towards him.

NURSE
Marvin! What did I say about outdoor trips?

Shay winces.

INT. PALATINE MEMORY CARE FACILITY - MOMENTS LATER

Shay makes her way across the dotted linoleum floors towards the reception desk, where a short, balding man in his mid-50s coughs profusely. His name tag reads ARTHUR.

An outdated computer sits in front of him, half blocking his face from visitors. He presses keys painstakingly slowly. The only workplace better suited to this man is the DMV.

Shay dings the bell. Arthur jolts and peers over his too-big computer screen as though impeded from something important.

SHAY
I'd like to help my aunt become a resident here.

Shay places a completed enrollment form before him. Arthur cranes his neck, searching for her aunt.

ARTHUR
Hold your horses. Where is she?

SHAY
Uh...social outing.

Arthur accepts her answer reluctantly, scans the form.

ARTHUR
Where's her signature?

SHAY
I didn't have a chance to--

ARTHUR
-We don't take people who don't come willingly. Now *if* your aunt *wants* to be here, we'd have to set up an interview with our resident director. See if she's a good fit.

SHAY
How's tomorrow?

Arthur clicks away at his computer for what feels like far too long for someone checking a single day of schedules.

ARTHUR
Earliest we can do is Monday at 1.

SHAY
We'll be there.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALATINE MEMORY CARE FACILITY

On the sidewalk, Shay attempts to order an Uber but the same "insufficient funds, enter a new card" message occurs. She swipes out of the app and glances up at a bus of old people. An advertisement for "Palatine Memory Care" adorns the side.

She walks up to it. The bus door opens.

SHAY
Does this bus stop in Darlington?

INT. BUS - A LITTLE LATER

An array of old people. And Shay.

An OLD MAN at the seat next to her tugs Shay's jacket.

OLD MAN
I saw your face on the replicator machine.

The old man grin, winks. The bus comes to a nauseating halt.

BUS DRIVER
Darlington!

Shay rises. *Thank god that's over*. She walks down the aisle.

EXT. BUS STOP - MOMENTS LATER

The bus pulls away. Not far from the stop: SAMMY'S SANDWICH. Though the red lettering is new, it's painted on a wooden sign above the entrance, barely holding on by a rusty chain.

Like the sign, the building is dilapidated, situated at the side of the road, between Main Street's pristine upscale boutiques and a ballet studio.

Faded paint peels off the shop's weather-beaten walls, revealing bare brick beneath. Shay pauses, glances in the direction of a street sign labeled "Sycamore."

She could walk home now, or...she could get her Aunt Mabel the meal she needs.

EXT. SANDWICH SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Shay clocks a handwritten sign that reads "Best Sandwiches in Town!" taped to the window. She pulls the door open, enters:

INT. SAMMY'S SANDWICH SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Behind the counter stand several boisterous young people making sandwiches. At the register: a man whose muscular build and tattoos appear more imposing than he could ever be.

This is SAMMY (30).

As Shay approaches the counter, she recognizes him. But he doesn't see her. His brow is furrowed at his receipt machine. It reluctantly dispenses a long receipt.

SAMMY
Gosh dangit! Georgie, we need a new roll!

A kid with a floppy red bowl cut and clothes too baggy for his wiry frame, presumably GEORGIE, hands Sammy a receipt roll. Sammy doesn't look up at Shay, but knows a customer's waiting. He inserts the new roll with too much force.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
Sorry for the wait! What can I do ya for?

SHAY
I'll do a ham sandwich. With extra mayo and no lettuce.

SAMMY
Sure thing, can I have the--

Sammy looks up. He's <u>thrilled</u> to see Shay.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
(full recognition)
-Shay Turner!

SHAY
Hi Sammy.

Shay hands over cash, smiling.

SAMMY
This one's on me. Been too long since I've seen you around here.

An order receipt prints, Sammy stamps it onto the counter next to him. Georgie accepts it.

SHAY
Turned this place into a sandwich shop huh?

SAMMY
After pop died, I wanted to keep the business. But ice cream got old. Plus Sammy's Sandwich kinda has a ring to it. Don'tcha think?

Shay nods, looks around the shop for something to talk about.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
So how the heck you been, Shay?

RYDER WAITE (17), a messy-haired loner with a sort of collapsed-in chest ENTERS the store.

He approaches the register, looks down to his right instead of looking at Sammy directly. Relieved, Shay steps aside. Sammy anticipates Ryder's order.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
Let me guess. BLT, no tomato.

Ryder hands Sammy ten dollars without making eye contact, then puts an ear bud in and drifts toward the corner of the shop. Sammy leaves the counter area and returns to Shay.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
So how long you in town for?

SHAY
Just the weekend.

Sammy slumps, visibly bummed.

SAMMY
That's too bad. I'm gettin' new wheels on my car Monday. They're gonna be sick!

GEORGIE
BLT hold the T and a Haaam, no L!

Shay bolts for the counter, grabs her sandwich, and leaves.

SAMMY
(shouting)
Good seeing you Shay!

At the door, Shay waves.

EXT. SYCAMORE STREET - DAY

Down the block from Sammy's, Shay turns onto Sycamore.

RYDER (O.S.)
Wait, stop!

Shay turns to see Ryder with a sandwich in his hands.

RYDER (CONT'D)
That one's mine.

SHAY
Oh. I'm sorry.

The two switch sandwiches. Ryder puts in an ear bud, turns back toward the direction he came in.

SHAY (CONT'D)
What're you listening to?

Ryder stops. He turns. Holds up his phone. The "Lost in the Dream" album by War on Drugs.

SHAY (CONT'D)
Great album.

Ryder stares at her for an awkward beat, then hurries away.

CUT TO:

INT. AUNT MABEL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Shay wanders in. Aunt Mabel sits in front of the TV watching *Who's Line Is It Anyway*. She laughs loudly. Shay looks at the screen to see Wayne Brady imitating a squirrel.

Shay puts the sandwich on the TV-tray before Aunt Mabel. When Aunt Mabel sees Shay, her smile sours.

AUNT MABEL
I ain't hungry. If you was here sooner, we coulda made something.

SHAY
And risk losing an ingredient in the sea of condiments lying around?

Shay turns off the TV. Aunt Mabel folds her arms, sulking.

AUNT MABEL
Kitchens are for messes.

SHAY
Not the kind that threaten your life, Aunt Mabel. And you shouldn't have to worry about it either. You need people who can help you.

AUNT MABEL
I don't need no caretaker. Fine on my own. Always have been.

Aunt Mabel reaches for the remote, turns the TV back on.

SHAY
The judge won't accept that.

AUNT MABEL
The judge, or you?

SHAY
I fly out Wednesday. I need to know you're gonna be safe...There's a private facility we can go see.

Aunt Mabel shakes her head, dismissive.

AUNT MABEL
I seen too many of those mystery medical shows to know how they treat people in those places.

SHAY
You're being paranoid.

Aunt Mabel walks to the dining table, adjusting the densely packed table settings, set for a full family. Aunt Mabel's motions get more erratic as she keeps talking.

AUNT MABEL
I'm bein' practical. Ain't you ever wonder why no one leaves those facilities recovered?

SHAY
Aunt Mabel, that's not how dementia works--

Aunt Mabel holds her hands to her ears.

AUNT MABEL
-La, la, la! I won't hear that word in my house.'Cause I *don't* got it.

Aunt Mabel's motions grow more erratic, rearranging plates.

AUNT MABEL (CONT'D)
It would be a lot easier around here if you believed me when I say I don't need help.

SHAY
Then why'd you break into your neighbor's house?! It was fine before. You had it fine! I can't convince the state you're capable--

AUNT MABEL
-Go ahead, abandon me like you abandoned your mama!

A plate slips from Aunt Mabel's grasp and falls to the floor. It shatters. Shay turns away, leaving.

Tears in Shay's eyes. This wound cuts deep.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Shay sits in bed, scrolling Instagram posts from her Broadway friends in New York, smiling, laughing, sharing meals.

PING, a text from Sammy: "Freshly waxed." A corresponding photo of his 2014 Hyundai Accent.

Shay groans, swipes it away, and turns out the light.

INT. AUNT MABEL'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Shay walks into the kitchen in sweats and a baggy t-shirt.

In the next room, the TV plays, its sounds drifting in.

At the counter: a full cup of instant coffee. Beside it, a pale green plate holds a mostly eaten ham sandwich, the one Shay got for Aunt Mabel yesterday. Shay smiles softly.

SHAY
You like the sandwich?

No response. Shay walks to the living room.

SHAY (CONT'D)
Aunt Mabel?

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Aunt Mabel is no where to be found.

Panicked, Shay rushes to:

EXT. SYCAMORE STREET - CONTINUOUS

Ominous clouds fill the sky. Rain falls.

SHAY
Aunt Mabel?!

Shay runs down the street, searching.

She dials her aunt. No answer. She heads to:

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

She dials her aunt again. No answer. Shay's panic increases.

Ambulance sirens blare in the distance. Shay runs faster... until she spots Aunt Mabel, watering grass at the park across the way. *In the middle of a storm?* Shay squints, confused.

SHAY
Aunt Mabel?

Shay trips and falls. Scrapes her hand.

Parked in front of his nearby shop, Sammy catches this in his rearview and gets out, bee-lining for Shay.

A car speeds by, intercepting Shay's view of her Aunt. Once past, the figure Shay thought was Aunt Mabel appears to be a broken public water fountain. Sammy catches up to Shay.

SAMMY
Are you okay?

Shay's phone rings. Still on the ground, Shay reaches for it.

SHAY
Aunt Mabel?

Her body language relaxes.

SHAY (CONT'D)
Will she be driving you home, too?

More relief.

SHAY (CONT'D)
Okay. See you then.

Shay hangs up. Sammy lingers beside her.

SAMMY
I got a first aid kit in the shop.

CUT TO:

INT. SANDWICH SHOP - LATER

Sammy stands behind the counter, building a sandwich. Shay sits at a table, gauze now wrapped around her hand.

SAMMY
So then I tell the guy at Motor Works that I could get a way better deal at Joe's Auto Parts.

Shay's only half there.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
My engine purrs like a cat now. In fact when I saw Pierce from high school, you remember from bio junior year? Told me he never heard a Hyundai quiet as mine.
(beat)
You want extra mayo again?

Suddenly, DORIS SODAYGA appears at the door. The social worker from Shay's flashback in Act 1, who was concerned for Shay's mom. Doris presses her face to the window.

Sammy sees her now too.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
We're closed!

SHAY
Doris...?

SAMMY
Was that a yes on extra mayo?

Too floored to respond, Shay wanders to the door.

INT./EXT. SAMMY'S SANDWICH SHOP - CONTINUOUS

SHAY
Oh my god, Doris!

Shay opens the door. Doris tries to enter. Shay awkwardly intercepts her path, points to a sign on the door.

SHAY (CONT'D)
Shop's closed. I can't believe you're still in Darlington!

Doris stares at Shay blankly, bewildered even.

SHAY (CONT'D)
I never got to thank you for my mom...I know things ended bad.

Shay searches Doris' face for recognition.

SHAY (CONT'D)
I never blamed you.

Doris walks away with a puzzled expression. Confused, Shay closes the door and watches Doris stumble away. Doris nearly gets hit by a car crossing the street. At the sidewalk, she knocks into tree, then crouches down in a bush hiding.

JUST THEN: a BLACK G-WAGON pulls up next to Doris. Two masked figures in dark clothing pull her into the back of their car. Shay glances around the street as the car pulls away. No one.

Did that just happen? Shay looks back at Sammy, but he's focused on the sandwich. He wraps it, puts it on the counter.

SAMMY
Think this might be my best work.

SHAY
Sammy. Someone was just kidnapped. A woman was just taken. Right out there in the street.

SAMMY
Out there?

Act Three

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

A burly guy OFFICER LAWRENCE POWELL gnaws at a barbecue rib, invested in an episode of *Buried in the Backyard*. From the laptop in front of him, an investigative-sounding narrator.

NARRATOR (O.S.)
When Johnny happened upon the victim's body, it had already been decaying for several days.

Shay glances down at Officer Powell, then returns her gaze to the more severe-looking cop before her: OFFICER EARL KINNEY. The more serious of the two, Kinney scribbles in a notepad.

OFFICER KINNEY
Do you remember anything about the clothes the victim was wearing?

Shay's eyes dart around as she remembers:

INT. SAMMY'S SANDWICH SHOP - FLASHBACK

SHAY'S POV: A disjointed blur of motion through the window.

A BLACK G-WAGON pulls up next to Doris. Two masked figures pull her into the back of their car.

BACK TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Shay wavers uncertainly.

OFFICER KINNEY
Ma'am?

Shay squints, replaying the memory in her mind...but it's suddenly hard to make out.

SHAY
Uh-she was...wearing something dark. I think. Dark blue.

Officer Kinney scribbles something on the paper. Shay tries to glance at it but he angles it away from her.

OFFICER KINNEY
What about the vehicle? You mentioned a van...

SHAY
(confused)
Yes, it was...it was dark-colored, too, I think. A van...um jeep. Maybe an SUV?

Officer Kinney stops writing, dissatisfied.

OFFICER KINNEY
And are you sure this wasn't a misunderstanding? If I'm hearing correctly, this woman that you didn't know--

SHAY
-Used to know.

OFFICER KINNEY
Shows up unannounced outside the sandwich shop, is unable to get her sandwich and gets a ride home...

SHAY
This wasn't an Uber. She was crouching behind a bush.

OFFICER KINNEY
So she was *hiding*?
(returning to his notes)
Possible drug use.

SHAY
(almost whispering)
No, it looked like she just rolled out of bed and forgot who she was.

Officer Kinney eyes Shay's get up and messy hair. Disheveled, wearing her own pajamas, Shay has just described herself. Officer Kinney can't mask his skepticism.

OFFICER KINNEY
Look, I appreciate you coming forward, but without more details, it's hard to proceed. We'll keep an eye out, but I'm not sure we've got a case here...

Uncomfortable, Shay folds her arms, glances toward the exit.

SHAY
Can you check your system to see if she's got a record? I'd like to make sure she's okay.

OFFICER KINNEY
I'm not authorized to share that.

SHAY
(frustrated)
A phone number?

ON: Officer Kinney, an expression of feigned apologia.

INT. AUNT MABEL'S HOUSE - LATER

Shay enters. She sees Aunt Mabel asleep in her living room chair and tiptoes past. Aunt Mabel opens one eye. Spots Shay.

AUNT MABEL
You go out like that today?

Shay stops in her tracks, looks down at her outfit. Sweats and the baggy t-shirt, from her morning-turned-crisis.

Shay eyes Aunt Mabel's "nice" muumuu. The one reserved for special days. Red lipstick haphazardly painted on her lips.

SHAY
Yep. You go to Bridge like that?

AUNT MABEL
Walty was there. So I wanted to look nice.

SHAY
Does Nina always drive you?

AUNT MABEL
Every week.

Shay nods, taking this in.

AUNT MABEL (CONT'D)
She was surprised you made it out. Asked if you prepared a statement for the hearing. I was thinkin' maybe we could tell them you was carin' for me.

SHAY
Aunt Mabel, you know I can't stay.

As Aunt Mabel weighs this, Shay glances out the window, distracted by a black van passing the house. A FLASH OF THE BLACK G-WAGON that kidnapped Doris, parked outside. Shay blinks. *It's not actually there.*

AUNT MABEL
They wouldn't have to know you was in New York.

Shay returns her gaze to Aunt Mabel, taking a second to process what her aunt proposing. Looking down at Aunt Mabel, sadness washes over her. Shay sits on the couch.

SHAY
(gently)
They do house checks. You know that.

AUNT MABEL
But Shay, I wanna live life by my rules. Spend my days in peace, not getting spoon-fed tuna from a cup.

Aunt Mabel folds her arms and sits back.

AUNT MABEL (CONT'D)
Just 'cause I ain't sharp as I used to be don't mean I can't take care well as anyone else.

Shay looks at Aunt Mabel for the first time like someone she might actually have something in common with.

SHAY
Well, I don't know about check-ins from New York. But I can see if the nursing home has some sort of outpatient arrangement. It'd be more than Nina's once a week but--

AUNT MABEL
-I could manage that!

SHAY
Well don't get too excited now, I've still gotta ask.

AUNT MABEL
You eat today? I'm hungry.

Shay reaches in her bag and hands Aunt Mabel another ham sandwich from Sammy's. But as she hands it over...

A FLASH of DORIS SODAYGA, at the door of Sammy's sandwich.

Shay sinks deeper into the couch, pulls her knees up to her chest and rests her chin on her knees, holding herself.

SHAY
Aunt Mabel, do you remember Doris Sodayga?

Aunt Mabel squints, trying to recall.

AUNT MABEL
Our old neighbor was it?

SHAY
The social worker who handled mom's case the year before--

AUNT MABEL
-With the short hair and bug eyes? From Florida? Boy, she hated the winter. It was bad that year...

Shay nods, eyes distant.

AUNT MABEL (CONT'D)
What about her?

SHAY
What happened to her after mom died?

Aunt Mabel shrugs and stands, folding a blanket.

AUNT MABEL
Probably got a new line of work. Ain't nobody do social work who knows what's good for 'em. Was it a fellow she married? No. That was Destiny. Or maybe it was Doris--

SHAY
-But she left?

AUNT MABEL
Lord knows I haven't seen her around.

Satisfied with this answer, Shay dozes off.

Aunt Mabel shakes out the blanket on her chair and places it over Shay, love and fear in her expression.

INT. AUNT MABEL'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

It's dark outside. Aunt Mabel sings "Sunday Kinda Love" somewhere deep in the house, the damp hum of the corresponding record moving through the walls.

Shay stirs, opening her eyes. She looks around.

She smells something...Her eyes widen.

Smoke BILLOWS from the kitchen.

INT. AUNT MABEL'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Shay swats the smoke, making her way toward a searing pot on the stove. Fire licks up its sides. Shay fills a cup with water, dumps it onto the pot. It hisses and the flames rise.

SHAY
Shit.

The SMOKE DETECTOR goes off.

Shay takes an oven mitt and covers the pot with a lid to suffocate the flames. A beat. She hurries to the windows, opens them, fanning smoke out with a dish rag.

She returns to the pot, opens the lid to find an extinguished fire and BURNT NOODLES.

AUNT MABEL (O.S.)
Shay?

Aunt Mabel enters the kitchen as Shay dumps the burnt noodles into the trash can. She looks at the noodles in the trash.

AUNT MABEL (CONT'D)
(angry)
I made that for us.

But what she really means is: I didn't mean to mess up.

Shay yanks the trash from the bin and knots it. She heads in the direction of the front door, passing Aunt Mabel.

AUNT MABEL (CONT'D)
I can take it.

SHAY
I got it.

Aunt Mabel drags a step stool across the floor and reaches for the smoke detector. She hits a button. It stops beeping.

EXT. AUNT MABEL'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Shay puts the trash in its bin at the end of the driveway,

She walks back toward Aunt Mabel's house.

In the yard next to them, shades have been drawn over the window, but a figure can be seen watching *Wheel of Fortune*, the sounds emanating from the TV speakers.

The flashes of the TV light up the drawn shades at weird intervals. The flashing light brings on the MEMORY OF AMBULANCE LIGHTS outside the house.

CUT TO:

EXT. AUNT MABEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT - 10 YEARS EARLIER

Shay's POV: An ambulance pulls up outside the house.

Shay runs toward an EMT and falls to her knees, distraught.

BACK TO:

EXT. AUNT MABEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The jeopardy crowd cheers. Shay turns back toward the road.

No ambulance. Nothing's there.

Her phone vibrates. A text from Joyce.

"You make a decision on the musical?"

INT. AUNT MABEL'S KITCHEN - A LITTLE LATER

Shay washes the pot in the sink.

Aunt Mabel sweeps behind her.

Shay turns off the sink.

SHAY
You could've died.

Aunt Mabel's quiet.

SHAY (CONT'D)
I want you to be safe.

AUNT MABEL
You want me out of your hair, same as your mama.

SHAY
That's not true.

AUNT MABEL
You couldn't wait to get out of here once she relapsed.

SHAY
Don't blame me.

Aunt Mabel shakes her head, stops sweeping.

AUNT MABEL
Baby, I would never blame you for the way your mama was. But you know you left like her whole damn life was just somethin' to forget.

SHAY
(defensive)
Well I'm sorry I didn't grieve the way you wanted me to.

AUNT MABEL
It's not that. You don't even care to see the ways you're just like her without even trying. You think you can just take people and box them up into bad memories. Baby, they're a part of you.

Shay looks like she might retort...but decides against it.

SHAY
We have a meeting at Palatine Memory Care tomorrow.

AUNT MABEL
What time?

SHAY
One.

AUNT MABEL
I don't take taxis.

Aunt Mabel hobbles out of the room. Shay cries.

INT. SANDWICH SHOP - MORNING

Sammy unloads avocados into a bin.

Various customers wait in line.

Shay bypasses them, moving behind the counter.

SHAY
Can I borrow your car?

Sammy looks up at her, evaluating.

SAMMY
I thought you were leaving today.

SHAY
Pushed my trip a couple days. But today, I have to take my Aunt to the nursing home.

This is a tough decision for Sammy.

SAMMY
I have a tire appointment at 3.

SHAY
And you will have you car back by then. I promise.

A moment of deliberation. He hands her the keys.

SAMMY
Where's the nursing home?

Shay's already gone.

EXT. SANDWICH SHOP - DAY

As Shay crosses the street to Sammy's car, she spots the place where Doris was kidnapped. She reaches for the driver side door handle, but hesitates for a moment.

SHAY
Damnit.

EXT. PARK - CONTINUOUS

Shay inspects the dirt beneath the bush Doris crouched in.

On a nearby bench, Ryder sits, eating a sandwich.

He looks back at Shay. She looks up to see him staring.

SHAY (CONT'D)
You good?

Ryder looks away, facing the sandwich shop again.

Shay walks to his bench, annoyed.

SHAY (CONT'D)
No, really. Is there a problem?

Ryder stares at her. He shifts uncomfortably, thinking.

RYDER
I saw it too.

Shay moves closer to him, eyes wide. Stunned.

SHAY
Yesterday?

Ryder nods.

RYDER
B62PLQ5.

SHAY
What?

RYDER
The license plate on the G-Wagon.

Shay stares at him in disbelief, then determination.

SHAY
Come with me.

Shay walks to her car. Ryder chews his sandwich, nervous.

RYDER
Fifth period's in 30 minutes.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - MORNING

Officer Powell chews a bagel, unfazed.

Shay looks to Ryder.

SHAY
Tell him what you saw.

Ryder scratches the back of his neck and vocal stims.

RYDER
I was eating my sandwich at the corner of the park. Two guys pulled up and grabbed a woman. They shoved her in a G-Wagon.

SHAY
That was Doris.

OFFICER POWELL
(to Ryder)
Aren't you supposed to be at school?

Ryder shrinks into himself.

OFFICER POWELL (CONT'D)
Your mom know you're here?

SHAY
Tell him about the license plate.

Officer Powell picks a piece of food from his tooth, begrudgingly picks up a notepad to record it.

RYDER
It was B62PLQ5.

Officer Powell writes this down.

OFFICER POWELL
We'll look into it.

SHAY
(getting angry)
That's it? No other questions?! Doesn't it mean something to you that two people saw the same kidnapping? I want answers.

Officer Powell leans forward, invading Shay's personal space.

OFFICER POWELL
You ever considered that maybe we don't have answers because there aren't any?

SHAY
(more angry)
What are you insinuating?

OFFICER POWELL
Sometimes, people see things that aren't there.

Straw. Camel. SNAP.

SHAY
(irate)
You know, Officer, my aunt is suffering memory loss. She's resided in your county for over a decade now. And I cannot imagine what I would do if something happened to her. Because I'm not convinced any real work gets done around here. Lives are at stake. Jesus, do your job.

Ryder looks up at her wide-eyed, baffled. Shay leaves. Ryder stands for a beat looking up at a non-plussed Officer Powell then, choosing the lesser of two evils, follows Shay.

INT. CAR - MINUTES LATER

Shay pulls up outside Darlington High School.

SHAY
Thanks for coming with me.

Ryder gets out of the car.

SHAY (CONT'D)
I'm Shay by the way.

RYDER
My name's Ryder.

He almost closes the door, but stops for a second first.

RYDER (CONT'D)
Doris what?

SHAY
Sodayga.

Ryder closes the door. Shay's eyes move to the bobbing Hula dancer bobble head above the dash. The clock reads **12:30pm.**

Act Four

EXT. PALATINE MEMORY CARE - AFTERNOON

Shay fast-walks towards the facility.

Aunt Mabel trails behind her. Shay turns back to face her.

SHAY
(trying to be encouraging)
Doesn't it look nice?

Aunt Mabel doesn't respond.

INT. MEETING ROOM - PALATINE MEMORY CARE - A LITTLE LATER

The room looks out into a hospitality room/cafeteria where various old people mill about. Some eat. Some play cards.

Shay looks out at the room. Aunt Mabel looks down at her hands. CYNTHIA COHEN (53) brown curly bob, matter-of-fact, but somewhat soft and motherly in her presentation ENTERS.

CYNTHIA
You must be Shay and Mabel. I'm Cynthia.

She takes a seat across from them.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
Did Arthur give you the grand tour?

SHAY
He did, yes.

Cynthia's focus is on Aunt Mabel.

CYNTHIA
Did you like the facilities, Mabel?

MABEL
They're fine.

CYNTHIA
Do you think you'd like to stay here?

Aunt Mabel frowns.

AUNT MABEL
No.

Cynthia nods, understanding. She pulls out the form Shay filled out and slides it across the table toward Mabel along with a pamphlet of the facility.

CYNTHIA
Listen, Mabel. I know transitions like these can feel overwhelming. But you might really like it here. I heard you like playing cards.

MABEL
On Sundays, with Wilty. Not here. Did my grand-niece ask you about the outpatient program yet?

CYNTHIA
Outpatient? I'm afraid we don't offer-

Mabel folds her arms and looks away from Cynthia, upset.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
We do offer a hands-off approach for certain residents, once we've established a behavioral baseline. Fewer check-ins, more independent.

SHAY
(hopeful)
That sounds nice, doesn't it, Aunt Mabel?

Aunt Mabel gets out of her chair out and leaves. Shay reaches for the form and pamphlet and follows after Mabel. Cynthia stands too, meeting Shay at the door of the meeting room.

CYNTHIA
I just want to assure you that this is completely normal. Folks can be resistant at first. But once she's ready to live here, I know she'll make a great fit for our facility.

SHAY
Are you sure an at-home arrangement couldn't be made--

CYNTHIA
-I'm afraid not. You might try looking into a case worker--

Shay nods with a tight smile. She's already tried that. And today was another failed attempt. Shay heads out into:

INT. HALLWAY - PALATINE MEMORY CARE

Shay sees Aunt Mabel exit through the facility's front door.

As she follows in that direction, Shay's phone buzzes.

A call from Ramon. Shay answers.

SHAY
Ramon?

RAMON (O.S.)
(exaggerated sadness)
My beautiful Rebecca Fajardo! What's this Joyce tells me you're doing a fourth contract with On Your Feet? And right before my auditions...

SHAY
What? No. I haven't said yes yet...honestly Ramon, I'd really like to be part of your production.

RAMON (O.S.)
Careful, hija. Joyce is a career maker...Might not be best to turn this one down.

Guilt washes over Shay.

SHAY
I need more time to think. But I promise you, I'm auditioning for yours. Please don't give up on me.

RAMON
You know I want what's best for you.

Shay ends the call, pushes through the doors of the facility.

EXT. PALATINE MEMORY CARE - CONTINUOUS

Shay doesn't see Aunt Mabel. *Uh oh.*

Sammy's Hyundai Accent WHIZZES past Shay. Aunt Mabel sits in the driver's seat. Shay's jaw drops.

She glances to her left and right, searching for a mode of transport. Several bikes are stationed at a bank outside the facility. She rushes to them, grabs one and pedals hard.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Shay charges out of the parking lot of the memory care facility. Shay scans the sidewalks to the left and right.

She weaves through vehicles on the road.

Shay screeches the bike to a halt at a red light. Just then, Sammy's Hyundai Accent SPEEDS across the intersection, traveling the road perpendicular to Shay's. Shay pursues it, narrowly missing a turning car. It honks at her.

EXT. STREET - SAME

Aunt Mabel leisurely sets the gear shift to NEUTRAL.

Unaware of her mistake, she exits the car.

EXT. HYUNDAI ACCENT - CONTINUOUS

She walks across the lot of a LONG JOHN SILVER'S restaurant.

INT. SUBARU - SAME

Shay spots the Long John's parking lot just as Aunt Mabel enters the food establishment. She pedals toward it...

But SUDDENLY, something appears off. Sammy's Hyundai Accent inches toward the lot's front curb, straight towards oncoming traffic. Shay screeches to a halt. She gets out of the car.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Shay waves her hands wildly at oncoming traffic, attempting to warn drivers away from the path of the UNMANNED VEHICLE. Various cars swerve to avoid it.

As Sammy's Hyundai charges off the road, it CLIPS the edge of the "Welcome to Darlington" sign. A police siren rings out.

A flash of terror on Shay's face. She turns to see an officer walking toward her. It's Officer Powell. *Yikes*.

INT. LONG JOHN SILVER'S - SAME

From a shitty speaker system, Katy Perry's *Firework* plays over the seemingly ordinary proceedings of this semi-flourishing chain restaurant.

Aunt Mabel grabs her 6-piece popcorn shrimp basket and turns toward the tables that look out over the road, sits at one.

As she bites into the first shrimp, she sees the commotion in the street. She SEES SHAY. Then, the crashed Hyundai Accent.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Aunt Mabel hobbles quickly as she can toward the commotion.

AUNT MABEL
It's my fault. Not hers!

OFFICER POWELL
Excuse me, Ma'am. I'm gonna have to ask you to stay back.
(to Shay)
Do you know this woman?

Shay nods.

SHAY
We were touring a nursing home, and I lost her...I didn't realize she had the keys...

Officer Powell turns to Aunt Mabel.

OFFICER POWELL
So, she was driving this car?

SHAY
No--I mean, yes. But not more than a block.

Officer Powell gives her a scowl.

OFFICER POWELL
(to Aunt Mabel)
Ma'am, I'm gonna need to see your license.

Aunt Mabel fishes in her purse for her wallet. After several painful moments searching, she pulls out an ID and hands it to Officer Powell. He inspects it.

OFFICER POWELL (CONT'D)
Ma'am, this expired eight years ago. I'm afraid I'm gonna have to take you down to the station.

Aunt Mabel looks like she might cry.

SHAY
Officer, this is all a huge misunderstanding.

AUNT MABEL
I was just tryin' to get some lunch.

Officer Powell readjusts his stance so that the gun at his waist is extra visible. He's addressing Aunt Mabel, but looks to Shay instead, a gleam in his eye.

OFFICER POWELL
And I'm just doin' my job.

The rip of a ticket, from his citation pad.

INT. POLICE STATION LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

NINA MADDEN (36), a too-pregnant-to-be-helping-other-people Black woman enters flustered. Shay stands at the counter facing Officer Kinney, who evaluates low quality camera footage of the incident on his camera.

OFFICER KINNEY
She left the car without parking it. That's reckless endangerment.

SHAY
But Officer, she was never supposed to be driving. Mistakes happen! Please, have some compassion.

Nina stares daggers into Shay, warning her to stop. Because being the social worker she is, Nina has better methods. She pulls out a form and holds it up for Officer Kinney.

NINA
Officer Kinney. If I may. There's really no need to persecute. The state already knows about Mabel's difficulty caring for herself. It's a psychiatric issue, sir. Her hearing's tomorrow.

Officer Kinney snatches the form, scrutinizes it. He leans down to his computer and types MABEL TURNER. A list of several trespassing violations and consideration for state-mandated psychiatric care. He's almost bummed to let it go.

OFFICER KINNEY
Checks out. But I will be submitting today's bail receipt to the court.

Shay and Nina share a look.

OFFICER KINNEY (CONT'D)
That's $500.

Shay hands over her credit card.

OFFICER KINNEY (CONT'D)
We only accept debit.

Trembling, Shay grabs her debit card from her wallet. Officer Kinney swipes it. A receipt processes.

OFFICER KINNEY (CONT'D)
Officer Powell, would you please release Mabel Turner?

A beat. Then the angry buzz of a distant holding cell.

Aunt Mabel steps through the doorway to the holding area. Defeated, she doesn't bother looking up.

INT. HONDA CIVIC - EVENING

Nina drives. Aunt Mabel looks out the window in passenger. Shay sits in the back beside a car seat.

SHAY
This isn't the way home.

NINA
Car was towed to Schaumburg. Best pick it up tonight, avoid a fee.

SHAY
Oh my god...Sammy.

CUT TO:

INT. D&R TOWING SCHAUMBURG - OFFICE - A LITTLE LATER

Sammy steps into a cluttered office, where a weary ATTENDANT (50s) sits behind the counter, shuffling paperwork.

ATTENDANT
Can I help you?

SAMMY
I’m here to claim a car. Hyundai Accent, plate number S-4-N-W-1-C-H.

The attendant taps away at the keyboard, then nods.

ATTENDANT
Got it. Name?

SAMMY
Sammy Hinkel.

The attendant disappears. Shay enters, disheveled and anxious. He turns to her.

SHAY
Sammy...

Shay nervously wrings her hands. He looks like he might speak, but he’s conflicted.

SHAY (CONT’D)
I’m so sorry, Sammy. I drove us to the facility and somehow she got hold of the keys. When she bolted out, I didn’t realize she’d take the car. And it could’ve been so much worse, but I let you down and--

Sammy softens as Shay's distress becomes evident.

SAMMY
-Hey. Accidents happen...ideally not to my car. But it was my choice to let you borrow it.

SHAY
And I messed up.

SAMMY
Is your aunt okay?

Shay double checks to make sure Nina’s still parked outside the tow shop. Aunt Mabel remains in passenger.

SHAY
Yeah, she’s fine. Just a little shaken up. I just wish your car wasn’t collateral damage...

Sammy sighs heavily, running a hand through his hair.

SAMMY
Remember when my Pop tried to transport ice cream by golf cart when his shipment company was on strike? Traffic jam for blocks.

Shay chuckles softly, nodding.

SHAY
Somehow not as ridiculous as my senile aunt getting booked for something like grand theft auto...but I'll take it.

Sammy grins.

INT. NINA'S CAR - LATER

Aunt Mabel gets out of the car and closes it, walking toward her house. Shay moves to get out of the backseat.

NINA
Where are you at with the place in Palatine?

Shay pauses.

SHAY
She still doesn't want to go.

NINA
Did you prepare a statement for the hearing tomorrow?

SHAY
Does it matter?

NINA
If you don't want her in the state's custody--

SHAY
-I never promised I'd fix it, Nina. I've been trying. If she won't go to private care, that's her choice.

Shay gets out of the car.

NINA
She told me how you used to go ice skating together.

Shay wavers at the open car door.

SHAY
Me and mom?

Nina nods.

NINA
She said she used to think about how free you both looked skating whenever things with your mom got difficult...You ever seen Aunt Mabel skate, Shay?

The question is not literal. Shay looks out toward the house, where Mabel hobbles up the porch step.

AUNT MABEL
(shouting)
Someone sent flowers!

EXT. AUNT MABEL'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

From the porch, Shay watches as the blue sky turns dark, the last bits of sunset disappearing behind suburban houses.

In the dim porch light, Shay admires a floral arrangement. Shay sees the note, titled *FOR SHAY*. Inside it: *So thrilled to have you back for a fourth show. You're a star!*

AUNT MABEL
New job?

There's hurt in her voice. Shay turns to face her, guilty.

INT. RYDER'S BEDROOM - EVENING

The room is dimly lit. Posters of MODERAT, THE WAR ON DRUGS, and U2 dot the walls. RYDER, sits hunched at his desktop computer, typing furiously.

On the screen: the name "Doris Sodayga" typed into a search engine. Various hits. Beside it, his laptop displays a digital map of Darlington, with various locations marked.

Ryder toggles between tabs and screens, cross-referencing information, sifting through pages of online records. He stops when he sees an image of someone who looks JUST LIKE DORIS. He clicks the image.

Suddenly, a pop-up appears, prompting him to subscribe for premium access. Ryder's frustration mounts as he tries to navigate around the paywall. He groans.

Hearing shuffling outside his door, Ryder quickly minimizes his tabs and pulls his notebook closer to him. RYDER'S MOM GWYNETH peeks her head in, concern evident in her eyes.

GWYNETH
You almost done studying? We missed you again at dinner tonight...

Ryder tries to appear nonchalant.

RYDER
Oh, uh. Yeah.

Ryder's mom looks at him uncertainly.

RYDER (CONT'D)
That it?

Ryder's mom stares at his blank computer screen. She purses her lips. She knows he's hiding something.

GWYNETH
I was thinking maybe it'd be nice to start seeing Barbara again. With college on the horizon, I know there's a lot of stress...And you seem...unsettled lately.

RYDER
I'm not unsettled. I'm autistic.

Gwyneth doesn't know what to do with that sentiment.

GWYNETH
Well, don't stay up too late. You need your rest.

She lingers for a moment, studying Ryder with a mix of concern and curiosity, then finally retreats, closing the door behind her.

As soon as she's gone, Ryder exhales, his shoulders sagging with relief. He returns his focus to the screens, determined to make progress. He screenshots the small image of Doris' face on the desktop screen and does a reverse image search.

INT. AUNT MABEL'S HOUSE - SHAY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Shay packs her suitcase. Various clothes lay scattered across the bed. A tapping sound. Shay glances up.

Ryder stands outside her window.

EXT. AUNT MABEL'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Shay pads out of the house, shoes only half on her feet.

SHAY
What are you doing here?

Ryder walks over.

RYDER
I found her.

SHAY
Who?

RYDER
The woman you knew. I ran a background check on the name. Only one lived around here.
(beat)
She's living in Tampa now.

Shay pulls her jacket around herself tightly in the cold morning air. She glances back towards her house.

SHAY
How'd you know where I live?

RYDER
Doesn't Mabel live here?

Shay raises a brow.

SHAY
You know my Aunt Mabel?

Ryder shrugs.

RYDER
She's at Sammy's a lot.

SHAY
Listen, I think it's cool you followed up. I just can't do this.

Ryder's face drops, let down. A twinge of regret in Shay.

SHAY (CONT'D)
Maybe the police can--

RYDER
-Forget it.

Ryder runs away hurt.

Act 5

EXT. HALLWAY - AUNT MABEL'S HOUSE

Shay knocks on the bathroom door. She's wearing a skirt and blazer, the nicest attire she brought.

SHAY
Nina's here. You ready?

CUT TO:

INT. COURT ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

The courtroom is mostly empty. The JUDGE sits at the bench, flanked by the BAILIFF. Shay sits at the defendant's table, her expression wrought with tension. To her left are Nina and Aunt Mabel, who wears her fancy muumuu.

At the back of the court, Officer Powell stands alone.

JUDGE
It's my understanding that your behavior has since escalated, culminating in
(reading Mabel's file)
Reckless endangerment involving a motor vehicle. Is that true Mabel?

Aunt Mabel wavers uncertainly. Shay looks down, embarrassed.

NINA
Your honor, it was not intended that she have access to that car.

JUDGE
And I presume it was not intended that she threaten human lives and property. Nevertheless, she did. Now, is anyone present here today willing to accept the role of legal guardian for Mabel Turner.

Aunt Mabel reaches for Shay's hand and squeezes it.

Shay's face burns with shame and guilt as she looks down, unwilling to accept the role.

AUNT MABEL
(whispering to Shay)
Please.

NINA
Your honor, I believe there's another option. With the right support, Mabel could remain in her home...Would it be possible for us to postpone the judgment until further evaluation of options has been conducted?

JUDGE
I'm afraid yesterday's incident calls for an immediate decision.

Shay's gaze flickers between Nina and her aunt.

JUDGE (CONT'D)
In light of the circumstances, and without any suitable alternative, the court orders that Mabel Turner be taken into state custody and transferred to the St. Louis facility. She has three days to relocate. Her assets will be reassessed forthcoming...

Aunt Mabel drops Shay's hands, trembling.

The judge picks up his gavel, but Shay holds up a hand.

SHAY
Wait, your honor!

Aunt Mabel looks at Shay, with enough hope to break a heart.

SHAY (CONT'D)
She's not ready to be taken into state custody. The house isn't ready. It would be worse to strip her of a familiar environment at this point.

The judge looks up at Shay, pleasantly surprised.

JUDGE
Look, I hear you. Frankly, I agree. But unless you want to take over as legal guardian...

Officer Powell interjects.

OFFICER POWELL
Your honor, I've gotta stop you there.
(MORE)

OFFICER POWELL (CONT'D)
I’ve got evidence to suggest this one’s got a mental history of her own. I don’t think she’s fit to care for her Aunt. She reported a false crime earlier this week.

Shay's jaw tightens as she fights back tears, the weight of the officer's words crushing her.

SHAY
It wasn’t a false crime!

Nina turns to Shay surprised. The judge pounds his gavel.

JUDGE
Order!

SHAY
I’ll be her guardian. What do I need to sign?

The judge folds his hands uncomfortably, weighing the situation. He looks to Officer Powell, evaluating.

JUDGE
Officer Powell, would you be willing to pass on Shay’s mental fitness if, say, the crime did in fact occur?

OFFICER POWELL
Don’t see how she could prove that at this--

JUDGE
-But if she could. Would you take issue with her serving as this woman’s interim caretaker?

Officer Powell shakes his head, throwing a smirk to Shay.

JUDGE (CONT’D)
Your work is cut out for you, Miss Turner. I move to postpone this trial until tomorrow on the grounds that Miss Turner is able to prove her mental fitness.

The judge pounds the gavel with a damning thud.

Shay hurries out, glancing back to Mabel just once.

SHAY
I’ll meet you at home!

A small smile on Mabel's face.

Shay hurries out of the court house. From the looks of the surrounding area, it's clear this part of the Chicago suburbs is closer to the city itself. More urban.

Taxis maneuver around pedestrians. Shay checks the time on her phone. **11:35.** She holds her hand out. A taxi pulls aside.

EXT. SAMMY'S SANDWICH - ONE HOUR LATER

Shay walks to the entrance of Sammy's and swings the door open, right as Ryder steps out through it.

The two BUMP into one another, causing Ryder's sandwich bag to fall to the floor. Headphones on, Ryder looks up at Shay.

SHAY
You said she's living in Tampa?

Ryder doesn't pull his headphones off. He reaches for his sandwich bag and heads down the sidewalk.

Shay takes a beat. *Okay, maybe she deserved that. But she's not ready to let him off the hook.* She follows after Ryder.

SHAY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry for turning you away earlier. I've been stressed.

Ryder stops in his tracks. He pauses his music, turns to Shay. Though he's facing her, he's not making eye contact.

Ryder shrugs, immune to the excuse.

SHAY (CONT'D)
You said her record said she was living in Tampa. That makes sense. She had a friend there.

His interest piqued.

RYDER
No social profiles.

SHAY
Checks out.

RYDER
Harder to locate.

SHAY
Why do you want to find her?

Ryder pauses, struggling with this question. After a moment:

RYDER
Weird things happen around here.

SHAY
What do you mean?

RYDER
Like the thing the other day.

SHAY
How do you know?

RYDER
I see them.

Shay's glances toward the park where Doris was kidnapped two days prior. Young kids play innocently.

SHAY
And no one else sees?

RYDER
You did.

SHAY
Maybe she wasn't taken.

RYDER
I know what I saw.

SHAY
Why pursue it if no one believes you? Doesn't that make you feel crazy?

Ryder looks out at the park now too.

RYDER
Is it crazier to notice things? Or pretend you don't when you do?

Something opens in Shay that wasn't before.

CUT TO:

EXT. AUNT MABEL'S BACKYARD - LATE AFTERNOON

Aunt Mabel pulls weeds from a small section of grass. There are too many weeds in this garden for her work to make any meaningful change. But the task absorbs her focus.

The sun shines bright overhead. Shay appears from the walking path at the side of the house.

SHAY
Thought I might find you out here. Beautiful day.

Aunt Mabel looks over, but continues weeding, placing each one in a red bucket on the ground. Shay takes shade beneath a nearby tree and watches the rhythm Aunt Mabel has found.

SHAY (CONT'D)
You never told me why you went into your neighbors house.

AUNT MABEL
You never asked.

Silence between them...until Aunt Mabel comes around.

AUNT MABEL (CONT'D)
They'd been sneaking through my yard. I knew it. Took something too, that day. I left my little wooden shovel out. Of course, I didn't find it when I went. Too many body parts in the wagon.

Shay looks up, alarmed.

SHAY
Body parts?

AUNT MABEL
You know, car parts. Handles, what not. They build things. Always so loud too. That's why they're always stealing my tools. Probably won't get it back now...

SHAY
Didn't mom used to be friends with them?

AUNT MABEL
Your mama made friends with a lotta people she wasn't supposed to. Me, I mind my business. Stayed outta trouble that way, up 'til now.
(beat)
You gon' prove a crime happened?

SHAY
I'm trying...

Aunt Mabel shakes her head, stops pulling weeds.

AUNT MABEL
Well if you knew what was good for you, you'd know police don't like facts. They like control.

Shay steps back...something clear to her.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Shay paces in her room, phone to her ear.

SHAY
Ryder? I figured out how we can--

RYDER
-I found the car.

Shay pauses, re-thinking her strategy.

SHAY
We have to make them think they found it.

INT. SHAY'S BEDROOM - AUNT MABEL'S HOUSE - EVENING

Shay's half-packed clothes remain on the bed from the morning. As she dresses in all black, her eyes remain fixed on her COMPUTER SCREEN's Google-Earth map. It shows the outside of an industrial park.

She zooms in with her mouse pad when

BZZZ! Shay's phone vibrates.

CALLER ID: Joyce Patashi.

She answers it.

SHAY
I'm sorry.

JOYCE (O.S.)
I'm not the one you need to apologize to. You're throwing away a huge career opportunity.

SHAY
I can still audition for Ramon's in a few weeks. When I get back...

JOYCE (O.S.)
Sure, Shay. That happens, you forward me my ten percent.

SHAY
Joyce, please I--

Joyce hangs up. Shay's eyes wander to a photo on her desk of her and her mom when she was a little girl.

In it, her arms are extended out, as she shows off a colorful theater costume. Shay's face hardens.

CUT TO:

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PARK - NIGHT

Shay tiptoes across the parking lot, approaching Ryder, who's prying the hood of THE BLACK G-WAGON open with a crow bar.

A stack of tinder lies near his feet. It opens with a POP. Shay appears behind Ryder. Without looking back, Ryder knows Shay's there.

RYDER
Did you bring it?

Shay hands him a jumper cable.

SHAY
You sure this'll work?

Ryder is silent as he attaches the positive cable to the car's battery and fastens a piece of steel wool to the other end, placing it among the tinder. He sets it on fire.

He bends down and fumbles with the tinder. The cable IGNITES but something about it's off...OH NO.

RYDER
Get back.

SHAY
What's happening?

Ryder covers his ears and runs.

RYDER
GET BACK!

The two run, ducking for cover in a patch of bushes at the edge of the lot. BOOM!! An explosion engulfs the car, its fiery haze mirrored in Ryder's eyes. The car's alarm RINGS.

SHAY
Ryder, you told me it was supposed to be minor fire.

Ryder stares at the flames engulfing the car, transfixed.

RYDER
It was.

SHAY
Well did you check to make sure no one was in there?

Ryder looks at Shay like she's an idiot. Duh.

SHAY (CONT'D)
Good, then.

But Shay's not very assured. She exhales shakily, she can't move. Ringing in her ears. The sound of a screeching tires. A FLASH TO Doris being abducted.

SHAY (CONT'D)
As long as the license plate's still visible when the cops come...

Ryder nods, a moment of shared silence between them.

RYDER
You think they'll find Doris?

Shay looks down, catatonic.

CUT TO:

INT. ROADSIDE DINER - NIGHT

Red vinyl booths and counter stools. As classic as diner's come. Ricky Nelson's "Lonesome Town" plays from a jukebox.

A woman sits at a table, looking out the window. She wears a scarf in her hair and sunglasses. A waiter walks over to her.

WAITER
You ready to order?

The woman turns to the waiter, removing her sunglasses. We now see that this is DORIS SODAYGA.

DORIS
Iced tea, please.

WAITER
Just you tonight?

Doris nods.

The thick words of “Lonesome Town” carry on as we journey to:

EXT. DINER - SAME

A lone restaurant at the side of the highway.

Several cars in the parking lot.

A police car pulls into it.

EXT. HIGHWAY - SAME

Miles and miles of flat horizon.

Maybe down in Lonesome Town, I can learn to forget.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF PILOT.