

CANDY APPLE RED
(EPISODE #101)

COLORBLIND LIMITED SERIES

Written by

Jessica Traxler

Created By
Jessica Traxler

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contact@justkissalready.com
www.justkissalready.com

FADE IN:

INT. MARTIN RESIDENCE - PAISLEY'S ROOM - MORNING

ROLL CREDITS over SLOW PAN of a teenage girl's room:

The room is well-kept and mature; decorated in hues of blush, cream, and tangerine. With floral wallpaper along the wall of the queen-size bed.

A TEEN GIRL ENTERS the bedroom from the hall, her hair wrapped in a towel. She happily SINGS along to the pink bluetooth speaker playing "Then He Kissed Me" by The Crystals.

She takes a seat at the vanity and unwraps her long, blonde locks from the towel on her head.

MONTAGE

Brushing her damp hair

Moisturizing her face

In her bra and panties, blow-drying her hair

Wearing a Navy, red, and white cheer uniform, she applies her make-up: foundation, eyebrows, eyeshadow, powder, eyelashes, blush, setting spray

She styles her hair into a perfect, high ponytail with matching cheer bow

She sprays a flowery body mist onto her neck and wrists

END OF MONTAGE

Perfection. She's a stunning girl of blonde hair like wheat, light green, seductive eyes, a pouty, pink mouth, button-nose, and a smile that could melt butter.

This is PAISLEY MARTIN, 16.

She grabs a **tube of red lipstick** and applies it to her mouth.

SUPER: Candy Apple Red

She smiles at herself in the mirror, proud of her look and mood.

Today is going to be a good day.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - MS. WEAVER'S CLASS - CONTINUOUS
DESK

Paisley is handed back her essay. There's a big red C+ on it.

PAISLEY

Oh, no...

The bell RINGS. STUDENTS hurry off to their next class,
EXITING into the hallways.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

Ms. Weaver. Ma'am.

A plain brunette with a pixie-cut, REBECCA WEAVER, 40, her
teacher, turns to her from the blackboard.

Note: Rebecca does not have a southern accent.

MS. WEAVER

Yes, Paisley?

PAISLEY

Um, I was wondering if you had a
moment to talk about my paper?

Rebecca nods.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

Well, ma'am, I was wondering why
you gave me the grade you did. I
spelled everything right and typed
it out in black ink this time.

MS. WEAVER

Paisley. It's not the sentences or
the spelling that I took issue
with. It's the subject. You wrote
about being a wife and a mother.

PAISLEY

Well, I thought the paper was
supposed to be about where we see
ourselves in 5 years. What we want
most out of life.

MS. WEAVER

It was, but... I just think you
should want more.

PAISLEY

More of what?

MS. WEAVER
More of life.

PAISLEY
I still don't understand.

MS. WEAVER
Paisley, don't you want to go to college, get a degree, and have a career?

PAISLEY
I guess I should, but...I just don't feel that strongly about it.

MS. WEAVER
You don't feel strongly about college? What about traveling? Or learning something new and exciting?

PAISLEY
Traveling and learning things is great. I just want to do it with my husband and little ones is all.

MS. WEAVER
Paisley, that can't be all you want? To be a wife and a mother? That's it?

PAISLEY
I don't understand what's so bad about that...

Rebecca SIGHS.

MS. WEAVER
Can I be honest with you?

Paisley nods.

MS. WEAVER (CONT'D)
I really think you should consider college as a future choice, and not a man, Paisley. What you wrote feels...antiquated and unfulfilling. It's a little old-fashioned to think the way you do. You should have bigger dreams than that.

The late bell RINGS!

MS. WEAVER (CONT'D)
 Better get to class. I know you
 have Spanish after me and *Senor*
Gomez hates tardiness.

Rebecca slides a pair of eyeglasses on and turns to the
 lesson plan on her desk, in effect dismissing her.

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS

TABLE

Paisley picks at her lunch with her fork, lost in a daze of
 Ms. Weaver's criticisms.

CHEERLEADER #1
 Paisley. Paisley... Earth to
 Paisley...

Cheerleader #1 waves a hand in front of Paisley's face,
 grabbing her attention.

PAISLEY
 What?

She takes notice of the other GIRLS on the squad staring at
 her. Three of the girls are a set of triplets: GEMMA, GINNY,
 and GISELLE, 16.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)
 Sorry. I was elsewhere.

CHEERLEADER #2
 Yeah, we noticed. Pick a name.

Cheerleader #2 thrusts a hat with folded slips of paper
 inside it in her face.

PAISLEY
 What's this?

CHEERLEADER #2
 We're picking basketball players,
 remember?

GISELLE
 You okay, Pay?

PAISLEY
 Yeah. Sorry.

Paisley reaches into the hat and draws a name. She's visibly disappointed with the one she got upon reading her piece of paper.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)
Somebody trade me.

CHEERLEADER #2
One pick and no trades. You know
the rules.

PAISLEY
There is no way on God's green
Earth that I can be Tucker Hall's
cheerleader all of basketball
season.

PAISLEY'S POV

Two tables up and over sits the varsity BASKETBALL TEAM. One of which is a tall, blonde boy in a letterman jacket-- TUCKER HALL, 18.

He catches Paisley eyeing him.

He glares at her with the visceral, fiery hatred of a thousand suns and flips her off.

She scowls at him with just as much disdain.

He takes a seat with his back to her.

Paisley grabs Cheerleader #1's slip from her hand and tosses the one with Tucker's name at her.

CHEERLEADER #1
Hey!

PAISLEY
I am *not* taking Tucker.

INT. JACKSON RESIDENCE - BIRDIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Where Paisley's room was bold and bright, this attic room is mellow, in creams and grays, with hanging lights, a dreamcatcher, and hammock by the cathedral window.

Paisley snacks on Twizzlers, sitting atop the bed with a Black girl wearing the same cheer uniform-- her sweet, but ditzy best friend, IMOGENE "BIRDIE" JACKSON, 16.

Birdie snacks from a bowl of popcorn.

They're watching a superhero movie.

BIRDIE

Ms. Weaver is so negative she'd depress the Devil.

PAISLEY

I think she's just looking out for me or something.

BIRDIE

Doubt it.

PAISLEY

Why?

BIRDIE

Because she hates pretty girls.

PAISLEY

That ain't true. And that's a mean rumor to start, Birdie.

BIRDIE

Ain't a rumor if it's true. She's mean to every girl on the cheerleading squad, and all the girls in the Young Republicans Club. But she's nice as pie to all the girls that do Mathletes and Student Council.

PAISLEY

I've seen her be nice to girls in the Drama Club and French Club...

BIRDIE

Because she's the advisor for those clubs. I'm telling you Paisley, she got it out for some of us because our boobs are nicer than hers.

PAISLEY

Her breasts ain't so bad-looking.

BIRDIE

If you can find them. She's like wallpaper; flat and stuck up.

PAISLEY

(laughs)

You ain't right, Birdie.

Birdie shrugs with a smirk.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

Come to think of it, Gemma told me she quit Film Club last year when Ms. Weaver took over for Mrs. Erkelens while she was on maternity leave. Said she was real mean about Gemma wanting to add *Beauty & the Beast* to the Watch List.

BIRDIE

See? Meaner than a rattlesnake. Nobody hates Disney movies except for hairy feminists.

PAISLEY

She kept harping on college.

BIRDIE

Your own mama and daddy don't care if you go, so why should she? 'Cause she went?

PAISLEY

Probably. Do you think I should go to college? I mean, you're going, right?

BIRDIE

Trè wants me to, because he's got his heart set on going to Princeton. But the only thing I want to do is stay here in Beaufort and take over my mama's bakery.

Paisley smiles, her friend making her feel ten times better.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

You've been wanting to get married and be a mama since we were 6 years old. And there ain't nothing wrong with that. Just means you want something different is all.

Paisley kisses Birdie's cheek, grateful for her support.

They continue watching their movie.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

Christian Bale is so hot. I'd bite his ass and pray for lockjaw.

PAISLEY

Meh. I like The Joker more.

BIRDIE

You would.

Paisley giggles.

INT. WALMART - CONTINUOUS

CHECKOUT

Paisley stands patiently in line with her basket of items.

Two people ahead of her is a teen girl, KASEY DEVEREAUX, 17, with a BABY on her hip. She's tall and skinny with red and green hair, a septum piercing, and bright blue eyeshadow.

She struggles a bit to hold the baby in her arms as well as pay the CASHIER for the box of diapers and baby food on the conveyor belt.

CASHIER

You're about five dollars short,
honey.

Kasey searches her purse and all her pockets but she doesn't have it. The cashier gives her a pitying look.

PAISLEY

Kasey, you dropped this.

Kasey turns to Paisley beside her, trying to hand her a twenty dollar bill.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

Fell out of your purse. When you weren't looking.

They both know it didn't, but Kasey swallows her pride and takes the bill from Paisley.

KASEY

Thanks.

PAISLEY

You're welcome.

Paisley returns to her place in line.

The cashier finishes with Kasey's purchase. Kasey grabs her bags and hightails it out of the store, baby in tow.

INT. MARTIN RESIDENCE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Paisley ENTERS with two Walmart shopping bags on her arm.

PAISLEY
It's me! I'm home!

She drops her keys into the key bowl by the door.

A lumberjack of a man with salt-and-pepper hair and matching beard, trots down the steps shirtless, ENTERING the foyer-- SHERIFF HANK "DADDY" MARTIN, 50, Paisley's father.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)
Hi, daddy.

DADDY
You get my shirts.

PAISLEY
Yes.

She reaches into one of the bags and hands him a pack of white undershirts.

DADDY
And my deodorant?

PAISLEY
Yes. Got that, too.

She reaches into the same bag and hands him a deodorant stick.

He pecks her cheek.

DADDY
Thank you, pebble.

He heads further into the house, toward the kitchen, unabashedly rubbing deodorant under his pits.

A young boy-- EMMETT "NEWT" MARTIN, 12, Paisley's brother-- wearing round eyeglasses and a Star Trèk T-shirt flies down the stairs.

NEWT
Got my stuff?

PAISLEY

Yes: hypoallergenic shampoo, fluoride-free toothpaste, your sensitive skin body wash, and a jar of honey. What's with the jar of honey?

NEWT

It's for the science fair. I'm showing how the extinction of bees is integral to the existence of mankind.

She hands him one of the bags.

PAISLEY

We'll die if bees die?

NEWT

Yup. My friend, Ricky, got a big ol' hive on the side of his house. Going over later to study it. Want to come?

PAISLEY

No, thanks. Maybe next time.

NEWT

Sure. Thanks for the stuff, Pay.

Newt hurries back upstairs, leaving Paisley stunned with his Earth-shattering tidbit.

KITCHEN

A middle-aged, blonde woman with a wide smile and loud laugh cooks at the stove as Hank rips open the pack of undershirts and slips one on. This is ELAINE "MAMA" MARTIN, 48, Paisley's mother.

Paisley ENTERS.

PAISLEY

Did Newt tell y'all about his science fair project?

DADDY

Depressing as all hell.

MAMA

Unfortunately.

PAISLEY

I got your face cream, mama.

MAMA

Oh, thank you, honey.

PAISLEY
What's for dinner? Smells good.

MAMA
Chicken and dumplings.

Paisley takes notice of her father slipping on his work boots.

PAISLEY
You can't stay for dinner?

DADDY
I'll have a bite or two, then I got to head out to the station. Can't leave the rookie all alone for too long. How was school?

PAISLEY
Was alright. Ms. Weaver didn't like my paper though.

DADDY
I loved your paper. What was wrong with it?

PAISLEY
She said I should want more out of life.

DADDY
Like what?

PAISLEY
College.

Her parents scoff.

DADDY
Not everybody needs to go to college.

MAMA
Or wants to. Me and your daddy didn't go and we're doing fine. Better than fine.

DADDY
Pebble. We already told you: if you want to go to school, we're fine with that. If you don't want to, we're fine with that, too.

PAISLEY

I know. Just wish Ms. Weaver understood that.

MAMA

I could go to school and make her understand...

She winks at Paisley.

PAISLEY

(snorts)

No. That's alright, mama.

Paisley takes notice of a pie on a cooling rack.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

That Shoofly pie for dessert?

MAMA

Oh! You just reminded me! I need you to take that to the new owner of Ol' Mr. Sam's house.

PAISLEY

Oh, mama, I just got home. I been out all day.

MAMA

I know, but it's only up the street. Take you 10 minutes on foot and 3 minutes if you drive.

Paisley SIGHS.

PAISLEY

Fine.

EXT. CHRIS' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Paisley pulls up in her black, VW Beetle. She parks behind a moving truck in front of a 3-story lowcountry house; white, with black shutters, double wrap-around porch, surrounded by Gothic trees covered in Spanish moss.

It's scenic and romantic in the early setting sun...

Paisley climbs out of her car with a vintage cake carrier in her hands. She swings her door closed with a push of her hip and makes her way to the house.

The access door is wide open. Paisley can see through the screen door that the place is littered with reusable moving boxes and bubble-wrapped items.

She rings the DOORBELL and waits.

MAN (O.S.)
Yeah, hold on!

Paisley huffs, wanting to get this piece of neighborly congeniality out of the way so she can go home.

(long beat)

A MAN turns into the entryway from within the house and approaches the door.

He steps out onto the porch and Paisley. Can't. Breathe. Her mouth gapes at the man before her:

CHRISTOPHER "CHRIS" HOGAN, 40. He's tall, with dark hair and light eyes. Though friendly, there's a dormant uncertainty just under the surface that makes him even more attractive.

Note: Chris does not have a Southern accent.

PAISLEY
My God...

Chris smiles, flattered.

CHRIS
I'm sorry?

The cake carrier nearly slips from her hands. She snaps out of it quick enough to catch it from splatting onto the porch with Chris' help; their fingers graze and Paisley swallows hard at the contact.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
You okay?

She nods, then clears her throat.

PAISLEY
Y-Yes. I'm Paisley. Martin. Paisley Martin. I'm Elaine Martin's daughter.

CHRIS
Elaine. My real estate agent.
Right. Sorry. Hi, nice to meet you.
I'm Chris.

PAISLEY

Lovely to meet you.

She stares at him with dreamy eyes a moment before collecting herself.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

This is for you. It's a Shoofly pie. Just to, uh, say 'welcome to the neighborhood'.

CHRIS

Oh, wow. That's nice. Thank you. I guess southern hospitality is real.

PAISLEY

I don't know about anywhere else, but in Beaufort, South Carolina it is.

CHRIS

Looks like it. I've never had Shoofly pie before.

PAISLEY

Well, you're in luck, because my mama makes the second best Shoofly pie in all of South Carolina.

CHRIS

Who makes the first best?

PAISLEY

My best friend, Birdie. She and her mama sell them at the church picnic every summer.

CHRIS

Not too fond of the church part, but I do love pie.

PAISLEY

I bake, too. Sometimes.

CHRIS

Do I have to wait until the church picnic to try what you make?

If she didn't know any better...

PAISLEY

If you're nice, not at all.

CHRIS

Good. Look forward to it. I, uh, I should--

PAISLEY

Right. Of course. Enjoy your night, Chris.

CHRIS

I have pie now. How could I not?

She smiles.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Goodnight, Paisley.

Chris EXITS into the house.

Paisley...runs off the porch steps and into her car.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. JACKSON RESIDENCE - BIRDIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Birdie and a teenage Black boy, TRÈ DOUGLASS, 17, her boyfriend, make-out heavily atop her bed.

(3 beats)

TAPPING at her window...

Birdie breaks their kiss and tells him to shush.

She climbs off the bed and opens the window.

Paisley pokes her head inside, grinning from ear-to-ear.

PAISLEY

I'm not going to college. I'm getting married!

INT. MARTIN RESIDENCE - PAISLEY'S ROOM - MORNING

Paisley awakes with a big smile on her excited face.

She turns on her bluetooth speaker, playing The Marvelettes' "Mr. Postman" as she goes about her morning routine.

This time she decides to wear a floral dress and wedges instead of her cheerleading uniform.

INT. PAISLEY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Newt is already in the back seat. He hands her a padded mailer addressed to her and picks up a copy of *Scientific American* to read.

Paisley rips open the mailer and SCREAMS WITH JOY! It's the bodice-ripper romance novel she ordered.

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - HOME EC ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A mixed CLASS of boys and girls, two at each workstation, as they learn to darn a pair of socks.

WORKSTATION

Except Paisley and Birdie who aren't working on anything.

BIRDIE

He's a Yankee? Ew.

PAISLEY

I know, I know. I didn't picture my future husband to be a northerner either, but he's moved here, below the Mason-Dixon line, and it's the only thing I give a hoot about.

BIRDIE

What if he's a Democrat?

PAISLEY

Well, then I guess I'll have to keep him away from mama. And maybe join the Young Democrats Club.

BIRDIE

But you're Treasurer of the Young Republicans Club!

PAISLEY

Well, now somebody else can be.

BIRDIE

Well, if you're going to leave YRC, then I'm going to leave YRC. Only joined up to piss off Jenny Buckner and make sure she wasn't voted President. My parents and Trè'll be happy I left.

PAISLEY

He said something funny about church. I don't think he's very spiritual.

Birdie GASPS.

BIRDIE

I know. I'm going to have to really work on fixing that one though.

TEACHER (O.S.)

Good afternoon, ladies.

PAISLEY

Hello, Mrs. Peverley.

BIRDIE

Hi.

Their friendly smiles are directed at a middle-aged woman in a gingham smock, their teacher, MRS. PEVERLEY, 60.

MRS. PEVERLEY

Do I even need to ask why you ladies aren't darning socks?

PAISLEY

We did the socks.

They show her perfectly darned socks, not a stitch in sight.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

But I also made this receiving blanket.

BIRDIE

And I fixed the hole in the butt of my daddy's work pants.

They show her their work.

They're her best students and clearly way ahead of everyone else, so all she can do is nod appreciatively.

MRS. PEVERLEY

Well, alright. Just keep the chitchat down a tad until the bell.

PAISLEY

Yes, ma'am.

BIRDIE

Yes, ma'am.

EXT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Paisley sits under a tree, completely engrossed in her romance novel.

(3 beats)

MS. WEAVER

Any good?

Paisley clutches the book to her chest.

PAISLEY

It's the best. I'm on book 18 and there's 22 in the whole series. I don't know what I'm going to do when I finish it.

Ms. Weaver gets a good look at the cover and snorts.

MS. WEAVER

Westward Spirit? Let me guess, billionaire cowboy looking for love meets spunky city gal that's moved to Texas after a horrible break-up?

PAISLEY

Oh, no. This one's about a sweet, country doctor and his mail-order-bride.

MS. WEAVER

Good God... Paisley, try reading something a little more challenging. Edith Wharton, maybe. Or Virginia Woolf. Hell, the Bronte sisters wrote romance novels, too, you know? *Wuthering Heights* is a good one.

PAISLEY

I read *Wuthering Heights*. I didn't like it.

MS. WEAVER

Why?

PAISLEY

Heathcliff was a jerk and Catherine was shallow. She didn't deserve Edgar.

MS. WEAVER

Well, that's an interesting take. Let's unpack that--

PAISLEY

I'm sorry, Ms. Weaver but I got only 15 minutes left of Study Hall and I really want to finish this chapter...

Rebecca actually appears disappointed by Paisley brushing her off.

MS. WEAVER

Oh, um, yeah. Sure. You, uh, finish your cowboy love story.

PAISLEY

(engrossed in book)
Uh, huh...

MS. WEAVER

Right.

Rebecca EXITS.

Paisley glares at Rebecca's back then sticks her tongue out at her.

INT. THE BEAUFORT PLAYHOUSE THEATER - AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

A flamboyant man wearing a pink ascot, DWIGHT "MISS PEACHES" ANDERSON, 45, smacks on a piece of gum as he sits alone in the audience.

MISS PEACHES

Okay, next!

A pretty, TEENAGE GIRL ENTERS onto the stage with a mic and mic stand.

MISS PEACHES (CONT'D)

No! I already have three singers, Valerie! Find another talent, sweet pea, okay?

The teenage girl EXITS backstage with a scowl on her face.

MISS PEACHES (CONT'D)

Next!

TEENAGE GIRL #2 ENTERS onto the stage holding plastic cups.

MISS PEACHES (CONT'D)

You better not come up on my stage with those damn *Pitch Perfect* cups, Jenny Buckner!

Teenage girl #2 angrily throws down the cups in her hand and EXITS backstage.

MISS PEACHES (CONT'D)
 Lord, give me strength. Okay. Who's next?

Paisley ENTERS on stage in a sexy magician's costume.

MISS PEACHES (CONT'D)
 Oh, hallelujah! A bitch with some talent!

PAISLEY
 Hi, Miss Peaches.

MISS PEACHES
 You doing your little magic tricks again this year, darlin'?

PAISLEY
 Yes, but all new tricks this year, Miss Peaches.

MISS PEACHES
 Perfect. Now, all I got to do is talk that girl with the big forehead out of rapping the lyrics to "Jesus Loves Me." Y'all are killing me this year!

INT. MARTIN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Hank ENTERS the kitchen as Paisley busies around the room putting the finishing touches on her cooking.

DADDY
 Mmm-mmm. Sure smells right in here. When's dinner ready, pebble?

PAISLEY
 I don't know. Ask mama.

DADDY
 What?

Paisley-- perfectly done up in a sundress and cardigan-- neatly puts all the food into a picnic basket atop the island.

DADDY (CONT'D)
 This ain't dinner?

Elaine ENTERS.

MAMA

No. But I'm ordering pizza if you want. Newt's getting Hawaiian.

DADDY

(to Paisley)

If this ain't dinner, who's all this food for?

PAISLEY

A friend. Be back before ten. Eat without me.

Paisley grabs her picnic basket and hurries out the side door through the garage.

DADDY

'A friend'?

Elaine shrugs and dials the number for pizza delivery.

I/E. CHRIS' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Chris opens the front door to Paisley on the other side. The picnic basket in her hands.

PAISLEY

Hi. Hope I'm not bothering you.

CHRIS

You're not. I'm just unpacking. Still.

PAISLEY

I figured as much.

Chris steps aside, holding the door open for her. Paisley ENTERS.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

With you being new in town I figured you wouldn't know where exactly to go for a good meal. So I brought one to you.

She hands over the basket.

CHRIS

You didn't have to do this.

She shrugs. Clearly she doesn't mind.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

That's really sweet of you. Thank you. First a whole pie and now an entire meal.

PAISLEY

Well, you seemed impressed with the Shoofly Pie, so I thought why not do it again.

CHRIS

Smells good. What's in here?

PAISLEY

Nothing fancy. Just some fried chicken, greens, corn on the cob, roasted carrots, cornbread, and a slice of peanut butter pie.

CHRIS

Where did you get all this?

PAISLEY

My kitchen.

CHRIS

You made me this food?

Paisley nods.

He is indeed impressed, but also stunned she went to the trouble.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Oh, well, since you made this delicious food for me, and I don't want to gain 20 lbs. alone, why don't you eat some of it with me? Unless you have to be home--

PAISLEY

No! No, I don't have to be anywhere. I can eat with you.

CHRIS

(smiles)

Great. The kitchen is full of boxes. Do you mind eating in the living room? Possibly on the floor?

PAISLEY

Not at all.

Paisley slips off her heels and holds them in her hand.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)
Where do I put my shoes?

CHRIS
You need your shoes off to eat?

PAISLEY
I need my shoes off because it's
impolite to wear them inside the
house.

He takes her shoes and tosses them atop a random box. She
laughs.

Paisley EXITS into the living room. Chris follows behind her.

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Chris is trying his hardest not to laugh, but he's doing a
poor job of it.

PAISLEY
You're laughing at me!

CHRIS
I'm trying really hard not to.

PAISLEY
And what's so funny?

CHRIS
A magician?

He bursts into a fit of laughter. She smacks his arm for
cackling at her.

PAISLEY
What's wrong with magic?

CHRIS
Nothing!

PAISLEY
Seems you think so!

CHRIS
I don't really. Just...aren't
magicians a little...corny?

PAISLEY
There is nothing corny about my
act, I'll have you know.

(MORE)

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

I was so good I was first runner-up last year at Miss Teen South Carolina.

CHRIS

I'll have to take your word for it.

PAISLEY

Or you could come to the pageant and watch me win this year.

CHRIS

To see you do magic tricks on stage, I just might.

Paisley grabs her purse and takes out a deck of cards.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

You carry a deck of cards around in your purse?

PAISLEY

To silence skeptical boys, yes. Shuffle them.

Chris shuffles the deck then hands the cards back to Paisley. She fans them out face down.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

Pick a card. Don't let me see it.

He does; the queen of hearts.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

Now, put it back in the deck then shuffle the cards again.

He does.

Paisley takes the shuffled deck from him and drops it onto the floor in a heap.

She points to a window.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

Is that your card?

Lo and behold, the queen of hearts is stuck to the window pane!

CHRIS

What the hell?

She giggles at his amazement.

He jumps up toward the window. He tries to grab the card but can't. He opens the window and reaches for it from the outside.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
That was on the outside of the window!

Paisley shrugs, feigning nonchalance.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Oh, you are very pleased with yourself right now.

PAISLEY
So are you.

CHRIS
I might be.

A moment passes between them...

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Why magic?

PAISLEY
Because it's not what people would expect from me.

He nods.

CHRIS
I get that.

He hands her back the card.

She gathers her playing cards and puts them back into her purse.

He's staring curiously at her...

PAISLEY
What?

CHRIS
Um, nothing... It's a school night or something, right? You should probably...get home?

PAISLEY
(disappointed)
Right...

She then reaches for their empty plates--

CHRIS
I'll take care of it.

PAISLEY
Okay.

CHRIS
I'll walk you out.

Paisley grabs her purse. Chris stands and offers her his hand. She takes it, lifting off the floor.

He follows her to the FRONT DOOR, grabbing her shoes for her. She takes them from him and slips them on.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Thank you. For the meal. I can't believe you cooked that.

PAISLEY
I didn't mind. Glad you liked it.

CHRIS
I loved it.

PAISLEY
(smiles)
Good.

CHRIS
I'll return the basket and the pie tin soon.

PAISLEY
Whenever you have a chance. No rush.

He opens the door for her.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)
Goodnight.

CHRIS
'Night.

FRONT PORCH

Chris watches from the porch as she safely climbs into her car and drives off.

EXT. MT. HERMON BAPTIST CHURCH - MORNING

Paisley and Birdie, in their best Sunday dresses, approach a moderately-sized church of red brick and huge stained glass windows, with other PARISHIONERS.

Behind them Hank and Elaine chat with BIRDIE'S PARENTS as they make their way to the entrance/exit.

BIRDIE
You're lying!

PAISLEY
I'm not. We talked for a good while
and ate dinner together. I showed
him a magic trick--

BIRDIE
Which one?

PAISLEY
The "Queen of Hearts" trick.

BIRDIE
I love that one!

PAISLEY
He was blown away, Birdie. I swear.

Birdie SQUEALS.

HANK

Hank stares curiously at his daughter and Birdie secretly WHISPERING back and forth.

INT. MT. HERMON BAPTIST CHURCH - CONGREGATION - CONTINUOUS

PEW

Paisley and Birdie's families sit together toward the front.

Birdie taps the shoulder of the young man in front of her.

He turns around in his rimless eyeglasses and nice, gray suit with Kente bowtie. It's Trè.

She winks at him.

He smiles bashfully at her.

Paisley smiles, too; loving her friends' affection for one another.

PULPIT

A middle-aged black man with gray hair, REV. DOUGLASS, 60, in a purple clergy robe, approaches the pulpit holding a well-worn Bible in his hands.

REV. DOUGLASS
Good morning, friends.

PARISHIONERS
Good morning.

EXT. MARTIN RESIDENCE - DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Hank's massive truck pulls into the driveway and parks beside Paisley's car.

The Martin family climb out and head for the front door.

Paisley takes notice of a NOTE under her windshield wiper. She grabs it. It reads:

Stopped by to drop off your pie tin and basket. None of you were home. Will try again later. --Chris.

PAISLEY
Be back later!

DADDY
What?

Paisley is already in her car and skidding out of the driveway toward Chris' house.

I/E. CHRIS' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

FRONT DOOR

Chris answers the door.

CHRIS
Hey.

PAISLEY
Hi. I got your note.

CHRIS
Yeah. Come in.

He holds the door open for her. She ENTERS.

Immediately, she takes off her shoes and sits them by the door.

PAISLEY
 (off his look)
 If you don't remember your manners,
 everybody else will.

Her insistence amuses him. He finds it endearing.

CHRIS
 Fair.

PAISLEY
 We were at church, then went to the
 Low Tide diner with my best
 friend's family.

CHRIS
 Seems like all of Beaufort was
 there. Felt like a ghost town for a
 couple of hours.

PAISLEY
 You could've come, too.

CHRIS
 Oh, no. Church is not something I
 do.

PAISLEY
 Bet I can get you to come to at
 least one service.

CHRIS
 Doubt it.

He winks at her before disappearing into the kitchen.

She looks around; boxes are still everywhere.

PAISLEY
 I see you've made a lot of
 progress.

CHRIS (O.S.)
 Haha.

Chris returns with her basket and pie carrier. She takes them from him.

PAISLEY
 Thank you. You washed them.

CHRIS

Well, I've got manners, too.

PAISLEY

But mine are better, because I'm offering to help you unpack some of these boxes.

CHRIS

You want to help me put all my junk away?

PAISLEY

(shrugs)

I got time and idle hands right now...

CHRIS

You sure there's nothing else you'd rather be doing on a Sunday?

She sets the pie carrier and basket atop an unopened box.

PAISLEY

You clearly need a second set of hands and some motivation. So why not offer my organizational skills and energy? Unless you're doing something else.

CHRIS

You mean aside from watching 90s grunge videos on YouTube?

She rolls her eyes, grabs his hand, and drags him toward the kitchen.

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT, CONTINUOUS

The living room is nearly complete, with the exception of a mid-size box in the corner.

Chris' furniture and décor is very Mid-Mod; a lot of brown wood with occasional splashes of color to give a retro feel.

Paisley finishes hanging family photos on the wall above a cool, record player console.

She smiles at the framed photos of Chris as a child.

OS, LOUD FOOTSTEPS trot down the stairs...

Chris jumps into the living room.

CHRIS

Master bedroom and bath are done.
Hated every minute of it. I need a
beer.

He looks around. Paisley really put his place together.

He notices a dust rag, bowl with soapy water, and a spray
canister of Pledge.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Did you clean stuff, too?

PAISLEY

(reads plaque)

Captain Christopher Michael Hogan.
You're in the military?

Chris approaches her to look at the picture she's pointing
to.

CHRIS

Yeah. Air Force. That was my first
day at USAFA. I didn't tell you
what I do, did I?

PAISLEY

It's alright. Seems I forgot to
ask.

CHRIS

(teasing)

So much for manners... I am an air
traffic control specialist. I tell
commercial and military planes
where and when to go.

PAISLEY

Why aren't you a pilot?

CHRIS

I am. Flight Commander Hogan. But
being an air traffic controller
affords you a better sleep
schedule.

PAISLEY

Did you fly drones?

CHRIS

Hey, why don't we talk about
something a little less classified.
Ask me why there are no pictures of
my mother?

PAISLEY

Why are there no pictures of your mother?

CHRIS

Because she left when I was eight.

PAISLEY

...I'm sorry.

CHRIS

Did you tell her to leave?

PAISLEY

No.

CHRIS

Then there's no need to be sorry.
(points to family photo)
That's my dad, a staunch atheist who would be wildly offended by your attempts to get me to go to church with you. That's my brother, Matthew, an obsessive painter who manages to get every woman he comes into contact with to fall in love with him. Then immediately hate herself afterward. So of course he lives in New York. And this is my baby brother, Andrew, an interior designer that picked out all of this furniture for me to spend six grand on.

PAISLEY

He's got a nice smile.

CHRIS

He's a dick. Me and Matty actually had to convince his ex-boyfriend that he could do better and to dump him.

PAISLEY

That's terrible of you two!

CHRIS

He cheated on the poor guy the whole time they were dating and gaslit him about it for a year. We told him to save himself and he did. I find our intervention to have been very charitable, to tell you the truth.

She doesn't want to laugh but he's ridiculous.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

But even with Drew being a dick, the three of us are still pretty close. We hiked the PCT together for the fourth time last year.

PAISLEY

What's the PCT?

CHRIS

The Pacific Crest Trail. It's a hiking trail that starts at the very bottom of California, right near Mexico, and goes all the way up to the Canadian border.

PAISLEY

You hike across three states? Every year? On foot?

CHRIS

It's not so bad on the 4th go-round.

PAISLEY

I bet the three of you get up to a hill of trouble.

CHRIS

Actually, we spend most of the time fighting. But by the time we reach Portland we've calmed down enough to have a good time.

PAISLEY

Sounds like fun. Like you love it.

CHRIS

I do. Want to come next time?

PAISLEY

Oh no, sir. I am not the outdoorsy type, I'm afraid. Camping and hiking don't exactly sound all that fun to me.

CHRIS

What is fun to you?

She thinks a moment...

PAISLEY

I like drive-in movies. Especially when they show scary ones. I like dinner parties. I love anything that has to do with water; swimming, boating. I read a lot, so books are fun to me.

CHRIS

Magic tricks.

PAISLEY

Magic is definitely fun. I play board games with my little brother. He makes a great magician's assistant, by the way. Me and my daddy do puzzles together, which sounds boring but it's actually really nice to just...let your spirit quiet down sometimes.

CHRIS

Music does that for me.

PAISLEY

Explains that box of records over there.

Chris crosses the room to grab the box from the far corner and brings it to the record player Paisley is still standing beside.

CHRIS

Alright. Let's see here...

He opens the box and flips through his records...

He holds up Green Day's album "Dookie" for her to see.

PAISLEY

Never heard of it.

CHRIS

Really?

PAISLEY

I think I'd remember an album called "Dookie."

CHRIS

Okay. How about...?

He pulls Pearl Jam's "Vs." out of the box.

PAISLEY

Nope. Sorry.

CHRIS

Okay. This album I fell in love with. Played it so much I ruined the vinyl and had to get a new one.

He takes The Smashing Pumpkins' album "Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness" from the box.

PAISLEY

Never heard of them. But their name is cute.

CHRIS

You're breaking my heart.

He rummages a little more through the box.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Okay. I found one you have got to know.

He pulls Nirvana's "Nevermind" from the box and shows it to her.

She shakes her head. She has no idea who Nirvana are.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I never fought a girl before, but--

PAISLEY

You'd lose.

CHRIS

To you? Yeah, probably. Seriously? You've never heard of Nirvana?

PAISLEY

Why is there a naked baby on the cover?

CHRIS

It's symbolic of-- You know what, nevermind. No pun intended.

PAISLEY

What's that?

CHRIS

What?

PAISLEY

This.

She pulls Blossom Dearie's "Once Upon a Summertime" album from the box.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

You like Blossom Dearie?

CHRIS

A white jazz singer from the 50s you know, but not Nirvana.

PAISLEY

I love her. Her voice is so soft and romantic. She sounds so in love when she sings.

Chris takes the album from her and carefully pulls the record from the sleeve. He places it on the player.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

Play "Manhattan."

CHRIS

Is there any other song that should be played first?

Blossom Dearie's "Manhattan" SOUNDS through the speakers.

Chris watches Paisley softly SING ALONG to the song.

(5 beats)

He takes her hand and gives her a twirl.

They dance, with a respectable amount of space between them.

Paisley continues SINGING ALONG.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - MS. WEAVER'S CLASSROOM - DAY

DESK

Paisley stares dreamily out the window in a happy daze, HUMMING the lyrics to "Manhattan" in her own infatuated world.

MS. WEAVER

Paisley Martin!

Paisley snaps out of it. The whole class is looking at her. Even Tucker Hall, who sits adjacent to her.

PAISLEY

Oh, I'm sorry, did you call on me Ms. Weaver?

MS. WEAVER

Several times.

PAISLEY

I must have been in my own little world. I apologize.

MS. WEAVER

Seems like it. Please pick up where Mr. Sprouse left off.

PAISLEY

Um, where would that be exactly?

TUCKER

(under his breath; scoffs)
Stupid bitch...

She glares at him.

MS. WEAVER

You'd know where we left off if you were paying attention, Paisley.

PAISLEY

I think we've established that already and I've apologized for it. Moving on would be you telling me what page we're reading from.

The room grows tense, nervous eyes shifting to their teacher, at Paisley's politely southern clapback.

Rebecca decides to swallow her pride. For now.

MS. WEAVER

Page 235. The second to the last paragraph.

PAISLEY

Thank you, Ms. Weaver.

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Paisley switches her books out at her locker, closes it, then heads toward her next class.

Just then Tucker bulldozes into her in a rude hurry.

Paisley quickly sticks her foot between his and trips him!

Tucker crashes to the floor, taking down a YOUNG GIRL and her science project with him.

As he collides with the linoleum, a set of false teeth fly from his mouth onto the ground.

The late bell RINGS as STUDENTS in the hall point and laugh at Tucker.

Tucker grabs his fake teeth and shoves them into his mouth. He gets up and turns to Paisley.

TUCKER

You tripped me, you fucking bitch!

Paisley turns on the waterworks.

PAISLEY

(teary-eyed)

I-I didn't. I mean, I don't think I did. I'm sorry if I bumped into you, Tucker. I didn't mean it. But you don't have to talk to me like that.

Everyone's watching as Tucker Hall yells at the sweetest girl in school, making her cry...

TUCKER

Fuck you.

Tucker runs off to his next class.

Paisley grins evilly and wipes the fake tears from her face.

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - CONTINUOUS

Blue mats are set up as the cheer/dance COACH supervises the CHEER SQUAD doing tumbles.

PAISLEY AND BIRDIE

BIRDIE

Shut. Up.

PAISLEY

Birdie, it was so sweet and romantic. I can't believe he had a Blossom Dearie album. It's fate.

(MORE)

PAISLEY (CONT'D)
I'm telling you, it's him. He's the one.

GISELLE (O.S.)
Who is?

Paisley startles.

GISELLE (CONT'D)
Who y'all talking about?

BIRDIE
Never you mind, Giselle.

GISELLE
I was talking to Paisley.

BIRDIE
And I'm talking to you.

Giselle rolls her eyes and takes her turn doing several back handsprings onto the tumbling mats.

PAISLEY
That was close.

BIRDIE
We got to be a lot more careful when we talk about your boo in public.

Paisley nods.

COACH
Birdie. You're up. Let's see you fly, girl.

Birdie runs into a combination somersault, landing perfectly on her feet. She smiles brightly to the whole squad CHEERING her skills.

INT. CHARLESTON AIR FORCE BASE AIRPORT - CONTROL TOWER - NIGHT, CONTINUOUS

CHRIS
(into radio)
Snapper, this is Tower. You are clear for take off. Over.

PILOT (V.O.)
(over radio)
Tower, this is Snapper. Much appreciated. Over.

Chris logs the flight into the computer in front of him.
His cellphone BUZZES in his pocket. He takes it out.

SUPER:

Paisley: I'll read your favorite book if you read mine

INTERCUT - TEXT CONVERSATION:

INT. MARTIN RESIDENCE - PAISLEY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paisley lies atop her bed, smiling at her cellphone.

Chris: Deal

Chris: What is it?

Paisley: I have two

Paisley: The Thorn Birds

Chris: And the other one?

Paisley: The Time Traveler's Wife

Chris: Never read The Thorn Birds but I know it's about as long as War & Peace

Chris: I'll go with The Time Traveler's Wife

Paisley: Ok LOL

Chris: You have to read Angela's Ashes

Paisley: Is it sad?

Chris: Yes

Paisley: How did I know?

She sends him an emoji sticking it's tongue out with a wink

Chris: LOL

Paisley closes out of her text messages and opens her Amazon App.

She finds *Angela's Ashes* and buys it.

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT

Paisley and Chris share Chinese takeout as they watch a horror movie. Chris sits on the sofa, while Paisley is on the floor by his feet.

Paisley nonchalantly watches the movie. But Chris appears uncomfortable with the amount of gore and violence onscreen.

(3 beats)

Chris turns the movie off.

PAISLEY
You didn't like it?

CHRIS
No. The part when that girl's
entrails were pulled out of her
body as she screamed to death was
my favorite.

She chuckles.

PAISLEY
It's just latex and rubber with
dyed cornsyrup for blood.

CHRIS
Sorry. Guess I'm a little too
chickenshit for it.

PAISLEY
Want to watch a Disney movie to
calm your nerves?

CHRIS
Haha... Yes.

She grabs the remote from him and changes it to an animated movie.

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - DEN - LATER

Chris is fast asleep on the sofa.

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paisley quietly snoops around the room:

She goes through his underwear drawer, checking the labels of the brand he buys.

She opens his closet. Everything is hanging neatly with military precision. She finds his Air Force uniform in a garment bag and snaps a picture of it on her phone.

She moves to a dresser. His dog tags and two service medals are sitting on top. Along with his watch and a bottle of red Polo cologne. She takes a picture of those, too.

There's a pair of eyeglasses on his nightstand, by a phone charger and a copy of *The Time Traveler's Wife*. She puts them on and takes a selfie then makes sure to put them back exactly how she found them.

She opens the bottom drawer of his nightstand: a 9mm gun, a box of bullets, and a storage lockbox.

She finds the key to the lockbox taped on the bottom of the top drawer. She opens it: the deed to his house, his SSN card, birth certificate, enlistment papers, etc.

She locks it back up and returns the key to the underside of the top drawer.

She opens the nightstand top drawer: pens, a journal, lube, tissues, condoms, and a fleshlight toy shaped like a vagina.

She stifles a giggle at his sex toy.

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chris stirs awake when Paisley drapes a throw blanket over him.

CHRIS

Fuck. Sorry. I didn't mean to fall asleep.

PAISLEY

It's okay. I'm going to go home.

CHRIS

(yawns)

Yeah. Let me walk you out.

PAISLEY

You don't have--

CHRIS

I can walk you to your car like a gentleman, Paisley.

She doesn't argue, wanting him to.

Chris stands and follows her out.

EXT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - COURTYARD - DAY

TABLE

Birdie and TWO other CHEERLEADERS eat lunch together.

Paisley rushes to the table excitedly.

BIRDIE
Shouldn't you be in--

PAISLEY
He needs to see me naked. Or almost
naked.

BIRDIE
How?

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - NIGHT

FRONT DOOR

Chris opens the door-- Paisley is on the other side in a sexy mermaid costume; a shell bra covered in dangling pearls, a mermaid tail, and a mermaid crown of small shells and sparkling costume gems.

In the b.g., the neighborhood is alive, elaborately decorated as KIDS and PARENTS go Trick-or-Treating.

PAISLEY
Thank God you're home! Can I use
your bathroom?

CHRIS
Um--

Paisley pushes her way inside.

PAISLEY
(running to bathroom)
Thanks, Chris!

CHRIS
Sure.

Chris closes the door.

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - GUEST BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paisley hovers over the sink, fixing her hair and makeup in the mirror.

She checks herself out; she looks good. Sexy.

She unzips herself out of the mermaid tail. She's wearing lace boy shorts underneath.

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chris is on the couch, picking through a giant bowl of Halloween candy. The TV is on but he pays very little attention to it; too busy sifting through the candy he does like and the candy he doesn't.

Paisley bounces into the room, holding her mermaid tail.

PAISLEY

Oh, my Lord! Thank you. I've been out all day.

She flounces onto the couch beside Chris, in just her underwear and seashell bra.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

First, I had to help Rev. Douglass and his son--my friend, Trè-- at church for the Christian Halloween party. Then I helped my mama with her costume. She and my daddy are going to the mayor's Halloween party. He throws this adults-only costume party every year. So I had to take my little brother and his friends trick-or-treating. Then I went to the haunted maze with the cheer squad. It's so cold out there and we're all dressed like mermaids. I hate that the captain gets to pick our costume every year, but she's a senior, so what are you going to do, right? I was finally on my way back home but I just had to go, and knew I wasn't going to make it, and thank God you were home--

CHRIS

Put the tail on. Please.

He's notably uncomfortable, looking everywhere but directly at her.

PAISLEY

What? My mermaid tail? But it's so hard to walk in that thing and it makes my thighs sweaty... Can I wear your pants?

CHRIS

Excuse me?

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - DEN - LATER

There's a half-eaten pizza, made to look like a Jack-O-Lantern, in a delivery box atop the coffee table.

Paisley and Chris sit on the floor beside the table, playing a card game.

And Paisley is wearing a pair of men's sweatpants.

CHRIS

You're cheating!

PAISLEY

I am not! How dare you?!

CHRIS

You are! I can't believe you're cheating at Go Fish!

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

I am not cheating! You're just bad at this game!

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I'm not bad at Go Fish! No one is bad at Go Fish!

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

And there's no cheating! You play and you win, or you lose!

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Exactly! And I'm losing because you're cheating!

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

How?!

CHRIS (CONT'D)

You're hiding cards!

PAISLEY

I am not!

He snatches 3 playing cards from the cup of her mermaid bra, careful of touching her skin.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

(laughs)

I don't know how those got there!

CHRIS

(laughs)

Yeah, I'm sure. Last time I play a card game with a magician.

The doorbell RINGS.

Paisley grabs the bowl of Halloween candy.

PAISLEY

There's no chocolate left. Just candy corn and banana-flavored Laffy Taffy.

CHRIS

Meh. Don't bother. It's eleven. They should've came out at six like everybody else.

He takes the bowl from her and puts it back down.

PAISLEY

It's eleven? Got to get home soon...

CHRIS

You turn into something at midnight?

PAISLEY

Shhhh... Wouldn't want to give away my mysterious, Siren allure.

(off his look)

What?

CHRIS

Nothing. Just realized how on-the-nose your costume is.

PAISLEY

What's that supposed to mean?

CHRIS

...Nothing I really want to get into.

PAISLEY

Possibly for the best. Considering I have to go. I'd hate to fall asleep in English class tomorrow. My teacher already hates me.

CHRIS

Why?

PAISLEY
She thinks things I want are silly.

CHRIS
Like...?

PAISLEY
Like...not wanting to go to school
after I graduate.

CHRIS
That's what you don't want. You
said she didn't like you because of
the things you *do* want.

PAISLEY
I just... I want to be a wife. And
a mother. A good wife, and a good
mother.

CHRIS
That's it?

PAISLEY
...Yeah. That's-that's it.

CHRIS
Well, speaking as someone whose own
mother realized what she wanted a
little too late, I think it's nice
that you know now. That you won't
leave your kids with a bunch of
questions and faded memories.

PAISLEY
I knew you'd understand.

CHRIS
It's not that hard to get. Your
teacher though, sounds like a
fucking idiot.

Chris stands. He offers Paisley a hand, lifting her off the floor.

He walks her out.

A beat.

Paisley hurries back into the den for her mermaid tail, then dashes right out.

EXT. CHRIS' HOUSE - DAY

The sky is gray and there's a light snow covering everything. Every house but Chris' is decorated for Christmas.

Paisley pulls up to Chris' house in her car. She hops out with a cookie box in her hands.

She approaches the house.

FRONT DOOR

There's an envelope taped to the front door with Paisley's name on it.

She opens it. It's a Christmas card:

CHRIS (V.O.)

I'm willing to bet you're on my doorstep with baked goods. And I'm sorry I'm not there to say 'Thank You'. Went home to Philly for the holidays. See you after New Year's.
Chris.

Inside the card is a gift certificate for a magic shop.

She smiles with tears welling in her eyes. He remembered her at Christmas, and it means the world to her.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Paisley sits atop the hood of a blue truck almost as big as her father's. She's reading the last page of *Angela's Ashes*; face wet with tears.

She finishes and clutches the book to her chest, crying.

MS. WEAVER (O.S.)

The doctor and the mail-order-bride
live happily ever after?

Paisley looks up to Rebecca, with her purse and laptop, at the curb.

PAISLEY

What? No. I'm reading something else.

She shows her the book cover.

Rebecca smiles.

MS. WEAVER

Paisley, I love that book. It's so good.

Paisley wipes the tears from her face.

PAISLEY

Yeah. But it's so sad, too.

Paisley runs her fingers delicately along the sad-looking boy's face on the cover.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

I see why this is his favorite book...

MS. WEAVER

Who?

PAISLEY

Oh, uh, no one.

Birdie, Giselle, and another CHEERLEADER approach them from the gymnasium.

Paisley climbs down from the truck.

The other girls give Rebecca dirty looks as they pass her to get into the truck.

Rebecca's not above rolling her eyes at them. It's the end of the day. No need for niceties after 4PM.

Short, skinny Birdie gets into the driver's seat and turns the engine over.

MS. WEAVER

Birdie, this is your truck?

Birdie pretends she didn't hear her and cranks the RADIO up, peeling out of the parking lot.

MS. WEAVER (CONT'D)

(low; scowls)

Little bitches.

INT. MARTIN RESIDENCE - PAISLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT, CONTINUOUS

Paisley sits at her desk doing her homework.

(long beat)

Her cellphone CHIMES with a text message.

SUPER:

Chris: I made waaaay too much spaghetti

Paisley breaks from her chair and flies out of her room.

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - DEN - CONTINUOUS

Paisley and Chris sit on the sofa eating bowls of spaghetti.

CHRIS

Well?

PAISLEY

Not too bad.

CHRIS

You're a shitty liar.

PAISLEY

Why's it so salty?

CHRIS

It's not salty!

PAISLEY

It is! And you didn't make garlic bread.

CHRIS

I did, but I burned it. It's at the bottom of the trash can.

She laughs.

PAISLEY

Crying shame, you are.

CHRIS

To be fair, I haven't had to cook for anyone other than myself for a long time now. I've grown accustomed to how terrible I am at it.

PAISLEY

How long since you've cooked for someone else?

CHRIS

I don't know... Two years? Fuck, two years.

PAISLEY

Why?

He likes her. Likes talking to her. But maybe this subject is a little too personal.

CHRIS

I took a vow of celibacy. Then a vow of silence to never talk about it.

PAISLEY

Haha... Tell me the truth.

(long beat)

CHRIS

I was engaged two years ago.

PAISLEY

What happened?

CHRIS

We got married. Had two kids and lived happily ever after.

She swats his arm, not wanting to hear sarcastic jokes.

He puts his bowl of spaghetti on the coffee table and opens a hidden drawer on the table.

Inside the drawer is an ounce of weed, a lighter, two blunts, an ashtray, and Dutch Masters.

He pulls out the ashtray, grabs a blunt, and lights it.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Three weeks before the wedding, she told me she couldn't see herself spending the rest of her life with me.

Paisley smoothly takes the blunt from his mouth and puffs on it before handing it back to him.

PAISLEY

Why?

CHRIS

She said I was "too nice" and that she didn't deserve me.

PAISLEY

That's the most ridiculous thing
I've ever heard. Who won't marry
someone because they're too nice?
Who did she want you to be? An axe
murderer?

Chris chuckles at her indignation on his behalf.

CHRIS

Paisley that's code for: "I cheated
on you."

PAISLEY

Oh...

CHRIS

It's fine. We clearly weren't meant
to be. And she didn't know me as
well as she thought.

He passes the blunt back to her.

PAISLEY

Meaning?

CHRIS

Meaning if she did, she'd know I'm
not all that nice.

PAISLEY

How so?

He takes the blunt back.

CHRIS

Wouldn't want to make you blush.

PAISLEY

Takes a lot for me to blush, I'll
have you know.

They're flirting. And really shouldn't be...

CHRIS

Oh, yeah? Like what?

PAISLEY

...Dark-haired boys with light eyes
who tell bad jokes.

CHRIS

...That actually doesn't sound like
much.

She takes the blunt from his fingers and rest it on the ashtray.

PAISLEY
It's plenty.

She leans forward and presses her red lips to his.

It doesn't take long for Chris to give in, kissing her back.

Paisley deepens their kiss and MOANS SOFTLY into his mouth. Chris grabs a fistful of her hair and--

CHRIS
Fuck.

He jumps up from the sofa. Her lipstick is all over his mouth.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
You have to go home.

PAISLEY
What?

CHRIS
Yeah, you have to go.

He grabs the bowl of spaghetti in her lap and tosses it onto the coffee table.

PAISLEY
Chris, wait--

CHRIS
That is not something that should have happened. I'm sorry.

PAISLEY
Alright. Look, I know you think that kiss was wrong--

CHRIS
It was wrong. Very fucking wrong. And you have to go home. Now.

Chris grabs her arm and yanks her up.

We FOLLOW as he drags Paisley to the front door.

PAISLEY
Chris, just listen-- Let me talk. It's alright. You don't have to kick me out.

FRONT DOOR

CHRIS

I do actually. And please, please
God, don't tell anyone I did that.

PAISLEY

I kissed you.

CHRIS

That version of events doesn't
sound any better. Please, Paisley,
just go home.

He grabs her shoes off the floor and hands them to her.

She can see how panicked and serious he is. She's
disappointed but doesn't want to make things worse.

PAISLEY

Fine. I'll go home.

Reluctantly, she EXITS.

Chris closes and locks the door the moment her feet step onto
the cold front porch.

INT. THE BEAUFORT PLAYHOUSE THEATER - DAY

Paisley and Birdie, along with 18 other TEENAGE GIRLS, run
through a synchronized number in their bathing suits as Miss
Peaches choreographs their movements.

STAGE

PAISLEY

(whispers; to Birdie)

I get it. I really do. But the way
he panicked and had all this quick
regret has just set my teeth on
edge.

AUDIENCE

MISS PEACHES

(to girls)

Okay, you three girls come forward--
smile. Pose-- smile. Turn-- smile.
Then walk toward the left-- *stage*
left, Madison-- figure eights, then
line up and smile. Good.

STAGE

BIRDIE

(whispers back)

Well, what did you expect, Paisley? He's an older man and you're the sheriff's daughter. He doesn't want to go to jail.

AUDIENCE

MISS PEACHES

Jenny Buckner, we are going to have to talk about that bathing suit, my girl. Not regulation. No, ma'am.

STAGE

PAISLEY

I would never do that to him. He gave me the kiss of my life. That's the last thing I'd do.

MISS PEACHES

Paisley and Birdie, quit flapping your gums. You're stumbling on your cues.

PAISLEY

Sorry, Miss Peaches. That was my fault.

MISS PEACHES

It's alright. Just come forward-- smile. Pose-- smile. Turn-- smile. Then walk toward the left. Figure eights, then line up and smile. Lovely.

BIRDIE

Just give him time. And some space. He'll miss you and come around.

PAISLEY

Right. Space. I can do that. I can give him space.

MONTAGE

Headphones in her ears, Paisley flops onto her bed with a sigh, listening to Billie Holiday's "Good Morning Heartache" on her phone

Paisley tries hard to concentrate during Ms. Weaver's class but her mind is elsewhere

Chris is at a book store. He passes by a shelf with *The Thorn Birds* on it. He contemplates picking it up but decides against it. He bumps into Rebecca as he exits the aisle. They smile at one another and make introductions

Paisley goes through the motions of cheer practice

Chris and Rebecca go on a dinner date together

Paisley is called on during her teen Bible study group, knocking her out of her daze

She practices a magic trick with Newt assisting her

Chris and Rebecca ignore the movie they're supposed to be watching, in favor of making out with each other

Paisley is at a boutique dress shop with Elaine, looking for an evening gown for the pageant

Chris and Rebecca walk along the beach, talking and laughing

Paisley attempts to do her math homework, but she keeps staring at her phone, wishing for a certain someone to text her

Chris and Rebecca have sex at his place

Paisley has dinner with her family, but Hank notices the morose look on her face as she pokes at her food with a fork

Chris and Rebecca have drinks at a bar as they watch a LIVE BAND perform

Paisley scribbles Chris' name throughout her Home Ec budget planner

Chris and Rebecca are camping. He points out constellations in the night sky to her

Paisley opens a mailer. It's a new romance novel in the series she's reading. She tosses it aside, uninterested

END OF MONTAGE

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

A basketball game. With a packed, excited CROWD, CHEERING them on.

Tucker Hall and Birdie's boyfriend, Trè, are on the home team. And they're winning.

SIDELINES

Paisley, Birdie, and the other cheerleaders hype up the crowd as their team scores basket after basket.

EXT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Paisley follows her family to their car.

DADDY

Pebble, you not going out with the squad and the team for a little bit? You can stay out 'til midnight if you want.

PAISLEY

No. I'm tired. Just want a shower and crawl in bed.

NEWT

Want to work on "The Disappearing Club?"

PAISLEY

Maybe tomorrow nigh...

PAISLEY'S POV - CHRIS

Chris is on the other side of the lot, waiting by his car. Rebecca approaches him, in her school spirit colors, with a wide smile on her face.

They kiss.

Paisley. Can't. Breathe...

Birdie ENTERS.

BIRDIE

Hey. You not coming ou...

Birdie follows Paisley's eyeline.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

Oh. My. God.

Paisley's eyes fill with tears as she watches Chris and Rebecca leave together in Chris' car.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

Pay... Pay. Are you alright?

A beat.

PAISLEY

Fuck. Space.

Paisley climbs into her dad's truck.

Birdie watches as the Martins EXIT the parking lot.

BIRDIE

Uh-oh.

INT. MARTIN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS

Paisley preheats the oven to 350 degrees

In a large bowl, she whisks together flour, baking powder, and salt

She then tosses milk, lemon zest, lemon juice, and blueberries into a mixer

She spoons the batter into three separate cake pans and tosses them into the oven

She whips together frosting in a bowl with a wooden spoon

DING! She pulls the cakes from the oven when they're done

She frosts the cakes atop a cake plate

The finished 3-layer cake has a vintage cake top placed over it

END SERIES OF SHOTS

I/E. REBECCA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

FRONT DOOR

Rebecca answers the door, surprised to see Paisley on the other side, holding a cake carrier.

PAISLEY

(big smile)

Hi, Ms. Weaver! Can I come in?

She doesn't wait for an answer. Just pushes right past her into the house.

MS. WEAVER

What are you doing here, Paisley?

PAISLEY

I wanted to stop by and talk to you about something. I baked you a cake. It's blueberry lemon.

MS. WEAVER

Oh, uh, that's really thoughtful of...

Rebecca's attention is drawn to a BEE buzzing around them.

She grabs the fly swatter by the door.

Waits... Watching it...

SPLAT! She stuns it, then hits its twitching body again.

MS. WEAVER (CONT'D)

Ha! Got you, asshole.

(off Paisley's look)

I'm allergic to bees. And somehow this little shit got in here.

PAISLEY

My brother says if all the bees go, then so do all the humans.

Rebecca doesn't know how to respond to that. She'd love to care about the future of humanity, but she's still allergic to bees.

MS. WEAVER

You wanted to talk about something, Paisley. Something that couldn't wait until Monday.

Paisley hands Rebecca the cake carrier. She slips off her shoes.

PAISLEY

You should make tea.

Paisley holds onto her shoes as she EXITS into Rebecca's living room.

INT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rebecca awkwardly sits down two mugs of tea, two small plates, two forks, and a carving knife on the coffee table between she and Paisley.

Note: None of the cutlery or plates match

PAISLEY

Thank you.

MS. WEAVER

You're welcome. Now, you needed to talk about something.

PAISLEY

Yes, I do.

Paisley cuts into the cake with the carving knife.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

I saw you came to the game last night.

Paisley puts a slice of cake onto one of the plates and hands it to Rebecca, jabbing a fork into it.

MS. WEAVER

I did. It was a shutout. Really exciting.

PAISLEY

I saw you after the game. You left with a really handsome man.

Rebecca blushes.

MS. WEAVER

I, uh, did. Is this what you wanted to talk about? My boyfriend?

PAISLEY

He's not your boyfriend.

MS. WEAVER

I think I'd know if he was...

PAISLEY

Then you should know that he's not.

MS. WEAVER

I don't understand what you're getting at, Paisley. Are you trying to tell me something?

PAISLEY

I know Chris. In fact, I feel like I've known him for three lifetimes.

MS. WEAVER

Okay...

PAISLEY

Chris is already spoken for, I'm afraid, Ms. Weaver. So, I'm going to need you to stay away from my man. Please.

(long beat)

Rebecca bursts into laughter.

MS. WEAVER

Are you serious? You're joking.

PAISLEY

No, ma'am. I am telling you that Chris Hogan is my future husband and I think it best if you stop seeing him. I don't want things to become ugly.

Rebecca narrows her eyes at her, picking up on Paisley's sweet-tongue, southern threat.

MS. WEAVER

And this isn't ugly? You showing up at my house insisting I break up with my boyfriend because of some fantasy you have about the two of you? You're a child, Paisley. In more ways than one.

Rebecca tosses her slice of cake angrily onto the coffee table.

PAISLEY

I do have fantasies about Chris, but trust me when I tell you none of them are childish.

Rebecca jumps up.

MS. WEAVER

Get out! Right now, you delusional infant!

Paisley stands. She grabs her purse.

PAISLEY

Please remember I warned you.

MS. WEAVER

(gritted teeth)

Go.

Paisley EXITS.

A beat.

Rebecca grabs the entire lemon blueberry cake.

We FOLLOW her into the KITCHEN as she dumps the whole thing into the trash.

INT. MARTIN RESIDENCE - PAISLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT, CONTINUOUS

Paisley lies in bed reading her romance novel.

Her cellphone VIBRATES. Chris is calling.

PAISLEY
(answers phone)
Hello?

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION:

INT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CHRIS
Paisley. For Christ's sake... What the hell are you thinking?

PAISLEY
How long have you been seeing her?

CHRIS
I'm not going to discuss that with you.

PAISLEY
Is she there?

She is. Rebecca is standing right behind him, arms crossed and scowling.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)
I'll take your silence as a 'yes'.

CHRIS
Look, Paisley, I don't think it's a good idea that you come around anymore.

PAISLEY
But I haven't been around. I haven't been around in 7 weeks.

(MORE)

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

Which seems to have been just enough time for you to find someone to occupy yourself with. Of which I do not appreciate.

CHRIS

Paisley. Did you hear what I said?

PAISLEY

Loud and clear.

She hangs up. And nonchalantly returns to her book.

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - MS. WEAVER'S CLASS - DAY

Rebecca wanders around the room with a copy of *Moby Dick* in her hand, reading a passage:

MS. WEAVER

"...All that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in *Moby Dick*. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it."

PAISLEY

Paisley scribbles something on a note and has it passed around the room until it reaches Giselle.

MS. WEAVER (CONT'D)

"It is not probable that this monomania in him took its instant rise at the precise time of his bodily dismemberment. Then, in darting at the monster, knife in hand, he had but given loose to a sudden, passionate, corporal animosity; and when he received the stroke that tore him, he probably but felt the agonizing bodily laceration, but nothing more.

(MORE)

MS. WEAVER (CONT'D)
Yet, when by this collision forced
to turn towards home, and for long
months of days and weeks, Ahab and
anguish--"

Giselle reads the note and stifles a GIGGLE.

MS. WEAVER (CONT'D)
Would you like to share the note
Miss Martin passed you with the
rest of the class, Giselle?

GISELLE
Oh, uh, no, ma'am. I'm sorry.

Rebecca catches Paisley rolling her eyes.

MS. WEAVER
Read it. Stand up and read the note
to the entire class.

GISELLE
I'd rather not.

MS. WEAVER
And I'd rather you did.

Giselle looks to Paisley.

Paisley shrugs; she doesn't care.

Giselle nervously stands up.

MS. WEAVER (CONT'D)
Go on.

GISELLE
"You ever get a real good look at
Ms. Weaver? Her face is all hard
angles. She... She looks like a
potato sack of elbows."

The CLASS does a poor job of stifling their LAUGHTER.

MS. WEAVER
Thank you, Giselle. You may sit
down.

Giselle takes her seat.

MS. WEAVER (CONT'D)
See me after class, Miss Martin.

PAISLEY

It's a date.

The class "Oooohs..." at Paisley's remark.

Rebecca ignores it and clears her throat:

MS. WEAVER

"...Ahab and anguish lay stretched together in one hammock, rounding in mid winter that dreary, howling Patagonian Cape; then it was, that his torn body and gashed soul bled into one another; and so interfusing, made him mad..."

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - MS. WEAVER'S CLASS - LATER,
CONTINUOUS

MS. WEAVER

So you're going to disrupt my classes now?

PAISLEY

You disrupted class by having Giselle read that note I passed her aloud. Your dry-as-a-month-old-biscuit reading of *Moby Dick* could have continued, without interruption, had you ignored the note and decided to ask me about it when class was over. But you didn't. Because you wanted to make a scene... And I gave you one.

Rebecca is trying everything in her power to not lash out at her 16 year old student, biting her tongue.

She takes a deep breath.

MS. WEAVER

Paisley. I don't want to get into petty squabbles with you about a man. Let alone a man you have no chance with.

Paisley's jaw tightens. Knuckles turning white at her balled up fists.

MS. WEAVER (CONT'D)

Chris is an adult. You're a teenage girl with a crush.

(MORE)

MS. WEAVER (CONT'D)

You'll be over it in a week. Please don't make this into something it's not.

They glare at one another, waiting... watching...

The late bell CHIMES.

Paisley takes a breath, calming her nerves, unscrewing her fists.

PAISLEY

Are we done? I don't want to be late to Spanish.

MS. WEAVER

I hope we're done.

PAISLEY

I bet you do.

Paisley EXITS.

EXT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

End of the day. School finally over.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY STUDENTS hurry to their bus, or car, for home. Along with A FEW straggling TEACHERS.

Rebecca is one of them. She fishes around for her keys in her purse as she makes her way to her car.

But she stops in her tracks... She has a flat tire.

MS. WEAVER

Shit.

She bends down to look at it and notices the other tire is flat as well...

She walks around to the other side of her car and those two tires are flat, as well. All four of them out of air.

Paisley.

Rebecca angrily slaps the hood of her car with her purse.

MS. WEAVER (CONT'D)

That bitch!

INT. MARTIN RESIDENCE - PAISLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT, CONTINUOUS
BED

Paisley lies atop her bed, looking forlorn as she listens to "I'd Rather Go Blind" by Etta James through her headphones.

(3 beats)

Her music is interrupted by an incoming call. It's Chris.

She ignores his call, then turns off her phone.

She grabs her laptop and plays MUSIC from there instead.

INT. MARTIN RESIDENCE - REC ROOM, ATTIC - DAY

A furnished room with wide-screen TV, poker table, a ping-pong table, U-shaped couch, pool table, and bar/kitchenette.

Newt sits atop the back of the couch watching Paisley struggle to perform a magic trick with a set of linking rings.

She's fumbling and off-cue.

NEWT
You okay, Pay?

Frustrated, she throws the rings down.

She covers her face with her hands to hide her tears.

Newt slides off the couch and hugs her.

NEWT (CONT'D)
It's okay, Pay. We'll get the trick right. You've done rings a thousand times. Maybe you're just rusty.

PAISLEY
(sniffles)
It's not the stupid rings.

NEWT
...Is it a boy?

She nods.

NEWT (CONT'D)
If he makes you cry, then he ain't worth it.

Newt reaches into his pocket and hands her a handkerchief. She takes it and wipes her tears.

PAISLEY

Told you a handkerchief would come in handy.

NEWT

I don't like you seeing a boy that makes you cry.

PAISLEY

I'm not seeing him. That's the problem.

NEWT

He with someone else?

Paisley nods.

NEWT (CONT'D)

What for? Whoever she is ain't as cool as you.

Paisley manages a smile at her supportive, protective little brother.

PAISLEY

Long story.

NEWT

I bet she's as ugly as homemade sin.

PAISLEY

She's a plain kind of pretty. But nastier than a wet cat.

NEWT

Then he'll come around. Unless he's stupid.

She pecks his cheek.

PAISLEY

You're too sweet for words sometimes. Come on. Let's get this trick down and then we can practice the one with Daddy's crossbow.

She hands him back his handkerchief and picks up the rings.

Newt jumps back onto the couch.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)
 (winks)
 Give me an intro.

NEWT
 Ladies and gentlemen, I present to
 you, the incredible, the
 mysterious, Madam Magic!

Paisley smiles and waves to the make-believe crowd.

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - HOME EC ROOM - DAY

PHONE

Paisley scrolls (stalks, rather) through Chris' Instagram account. The last few posts are of he and Rebecca, looking very much like a couple in love.

Paisley's perfectly manicured NAILS DRUM agitatedly on the counter as she reads their nauseating, lovey captions.

The whole world is tuned out as she finds Rebecca's Facebook page and sees that her relationship status is linked to Chris' own Facebook page.

Her profile picture is of she and Chris. Kissing.

Paisley's drumming fingers ball into a white knuckle fist as she stares at it.

BIRDIE (O.S.)
 Paisley... Paisley... Paisley!

Paisley snaps to-- There's smoke coming out of the stove she's standing next to.

Birdie grabs oven mitts, opens the oven, and pulls out a burnt casserole. She sets it atop the counter, fanning away the smoky remains of it.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)
 You burned the meatball casserole!

PAISLEY
 Oh, my God...

She looks up, her classmates stare wide-eyed at her.

Paisley does not fuck up in Home Ec. She goes above and beyond. She could take this class blindfolded and pass with flying colors. Burning a casserole is something she does *not* do.

BIRDIE
Pay, seriously, are you--

Paisley grabs her purse and runs out of the room.

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

COUCH

Chris lies across his couch reading *The Thorn Birds*. He appears pretty engrossed by it, halfway through the book already.

(long beat)

OS, the front door bursts open with a BANG!

Chris jumps up from the couch at the intrusive noise.

Paisley STORMS INTO the living room with her shoes in her hands.

PAISLEY
I have never burned a casserole in
my life!

CHRIS
What?

She throws her shoes at him!

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Are you out of your mind?!

She swings at him but he ducks just in-time for her hit to miss!

He grabs hold of her arms and pins her to the wall.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Stop.

They're close, breathing hard and heavy... Worked up and angry...

(3 beats)

Chris lets her go, putting space between them.

He EXITS toward the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Chris opens the fridge and grabs a beer. He snaps the cap off on the edge of the counter and takes a long pull.

Paisley ENTERS.

PAISLEY

I want an honest conversation with you.

Chris chuckles wryly.

CHRIS

Yeah. Seems like that's something that needs to happen.

He takes a seat at the breakfast table.

A beat.

He pushes the chair next to him toward her, inviting her to sit.

She does.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

You don't repeat a single fucking thing I'm about to say to you. Understand?

She nods.

(long beat)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I'm attracted to you. I don't think I've ever been as attracted to a woman as I am to you. I think you're sweet. I think you're funny. And I think you're smarter than anyone's ever given you credit for. I think... I think you are all the things I've ever wanted in another person. You check every box. Except one. You're sixteen, Paisley. You're in high school and I'm forty.

PAISLEY

That matters very little to me.

CHRIS

Yeah, I've picked up on your *subtle clues* about that. You can't come over anymore. You can't call me. And you can't stab Rebecca's tires out.

PAISLEY

Who says I did that?

He smirks a lopsided grin at her denial.

CHRIS

I don't know if I wish every woman I was ever with fought this hard to be with me, or if I just like the fact that you're the only one who has.

PAISLEY

I know what I want, Chris. It's just that plain to me.

CHRIS

What is it you want?

PAISLEY

I thought I was none too subtle...

He smirks again.

CHRIS

I really do wish you were five years older.

PAISLEY

5 years?!

CHRIS

Seems a safer amount of time to wait than two years.

PAISLEY

...You'd wait 2 years for me?

CHRIS

...I thought about it.

She blushes. It's longer than she wants to wait for him, but she's glad he admitted to at least thinking about it.

PAISLEY

Do you love Ms. Weaver?

CHRIS

No. But I don't mind passing the time with her.

PAISLEY

I don't see how you could stand it given that woman's so mean she could haunt a house.

Chris laughs, despite himself.

CHRIS

See? You're funny.

Chris strides to the trash can. He drinks the rest of his beer and tosses the empty bottle into the garbage.

He turns around and Paisley's right there, taking him into a hard kiss.

Chris deepens the kiss, pulling her against him. His hands are all over her body.

Paisley slips her knee between his legs, rubbing her thigh against him.

Chris breaks their kiss and puts distance between them.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Did you show up to my house on Halloween on purpose?

She smirks, and pulls him close, licking into his mouth.

PAISLEY

Put your hands back on my body.

He leans down to kiss her again--

MS. WEAVER (O.S.)

Chris!

CHRIS

Shit.

PAISLEY

Tell her to go.

Chris hesitates.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

Tell her.

MS. WEAVER (O.S.)
Whose shoes are these?

Chris takes Paisley's hand and EXITS the kitchen.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rebecca curiously looks at the shoes in her hands, wondering who they belong to.

Chris and Paisley ENTER.

MS. WEAVER
What the fuck?!

CHRIS
Paisley was just leaving. We had a long talk and I think she understands some things now.

PAISLEY
(gritted teeth)
Do I?

CHRIS
Yes. You do.

Paisley is livid. She'd cried if she weren't so angry.

(long beat)

She approaches Rebecca. She looks down at the other woman's feet; Rebecca is wearing shoes. Inside the house.

Paisley chuckles dryly at her lack of etiquette.

She snatches her own shoes from Rebecca's hands and crosses the room back to Chris.

She leans into his ear:

PAISLEY
(whispers)
Don't make me hurt her.

Paisley EXITS out the front door.

A beat.

MS. WEAVER
What the fuck?!

INT. MARTIN RESIDENCE - REC ROOM, ATTIC - LATE NIGHT,
CONTINUOUS

The room is completely dark, with the exception of the TV
being on.

COUCH

Paisley's watching *Fatal Attraction*.

(3 beats)

DADDY (O.S.)
Pebble?

PAISLEY
Hm?

Hank rounds the couch and sits beside her.

DADDY
It's three in the morning. What are
you doing up?

PAISLEY
Couldn't sleep.

She has yet to look at him, focused on the screen.

He's worried about her. She's withdrawn and sullen most of
the time. Hardly eats and now can't sleep.

DADDY
Everything alright? You want to
talk about something?

PAISLEY
No, daddy. I'm fine.

She's anything but fine.

DADDY
How 'bout I stay up and finish the
movie with you?

PAISLEY
If you want.

Hank watches her a beat, brow furrowed in concern.

He wraps an arm around her shoulders. She leans in, and he
holds her while they watch the movie.

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - MS. WEAVER'S CLASS - DAY

Rebecca is at the front of the class. There are thematic notes about *Moby Dick* on the blackboard behind her.

MS. WEAVER

A number of instances suggest that the characters are actually deceiving themselves when they think they see the work of fate, and that fate either, doesn't exist, or is one of the forces human beings can have no real understanding of. For example--

Paisley ENTERS the classroom. She's not wearing make up, her hair in a messy bun atop her head, and she's in Chris' sweatpants.

MS. WEAVER (CONT'D)

You're late, Paisley.

She makes her way to her seat.

PAISLEY

(low)
Fuck you.

MS. WEAVER

What did you say? I didn't catch that?

PAISLEY

I said "fuck you," you flat-chested bitch.

The CLASS 'Oooohhs' at Paisley's outburst.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Paisley and Rebecca sit across the PRINCIPAL'S desk.

PRINCIPAL

This seems so unlike you, Paisley. Is everything alright? Everything good at home?

PAISLEY

Yes, sir.

PRINCIPAL

There any other issues going on?

PAISLEY

Other than me wanting to be transferred from Ms. Weaver's class? No.

MS. WEAVER

I'd gladly authorize a transfer to another English teacher for Paisley.

PRINCIPAL

You sure you two can't work out whatever the issue is?

PAISLEY

No.

MS. WEAVER

Absolutely not.

PRINCIPAL

Well, alright. We'll make sure you're in Mr. Leon's English class come Monday. That might change a few other things about your class schedule. That alright with you?

PAISLEY

I don't mind. It's fine.

PRINCIPAL

Okay. But, uh, we do have to do something about the way you spoke to Ms. Weaver. Now, seeing as how you ain't ever been a lick of trouble, and this here is the first time I even heard a bad word toward you, I'm going to just give you a Saturday detention.

MS. WEAVER

For being late to class with no note and swearing at me?

PRINCIPAL

You heard me say this was a first offense, right, Rebecca? I think students are allowed a bit of leniency when they've been as good as Paisley.

He hands Paisley a detention slip.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)
 (to Paisley)
 And she knows not to do it again.
 Ain't that right, darling?

PAISLEY
 Yes, sir. Thank you, Principal
 Willis.

Paisley stands, gathering her stuff.

PRINCIPAL
 You needing a pass to where you got
 to go?

PAISLEY
 No, sir. But thank you.

Paisley EXITS.

MS. WEAVER
 I think that punishment was way too
 nice, Leo.

PRINCIPAL
 Of course you do. That's why I gave
 it to her.
 (off her look)
 Every time I turn around there's
 some cheerleader, or girl from the
 YRC, in my office with tears in her
 eyes about you. Now, I don't know
 what you got against them girls,
 but most of them are good; honor
 students and pageant queens. Yet,
 somehow to you they're lazy and
 rude. I go to church with these
 girls and their families. Birdie
 Jackson's daddy has been my best
 friend since we were no bigger than
 a pricker bush. I know the girl
 he's raised. And I know Paisley
 Martin, too.

MS. WEAVER
 You calling me a bully, David?

PRINCIPAL
 I hope not.

He nods at the door. They're done.

Rebecca EXITS.

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - LIBRARY - MORNING

Paisley and EIGHT other STUDENTS sit at individual desks.

One of the students is Kasey. Her hair is bright blue now, in two French braids.

LIBRARIAN

You don't want to be here, and I don't want to be here. So let's make this easy on the both of us: I don't give an armadillo's ass crack if you sleep the whole time, read a book, draw, or TikTok on your damn phones. Just so long as you're quiet. Which means if you didn't bring a set of headphones than don't bother with any screens. Ideally, you'd take this time to work on any assignments you got, but like I said before, I don't give a woodpecker's willy what you do, just so long as you do it without any noise. One to two is lunchtime, so I hope you brought something because the cafeteria is closed and I don't cook. You get two bathroom breaks; one at a time. I suggest using one of them after lunch. Any questions?

PAISLEY

No, ma'am.

The rest of her classmates bother not responding.

LIBRARIAN

Paisley Martin, is that you, girl?

PAISLEY

Yes, ma'am.

LIBRARIAN

What in the hell...?

The librarian shakes her head in disappointment.

Paisley sinks a little in her seat.

LIBRARIAN (CONT'D)

I'll be at the front desk. If any of you need anything, come up there.

(MORE)

LIBRARIAN (CONT'D)
 Otherwise, stay in your seats.
 Hopefully, the next 6 hours can
 breeze by without incident.

The librarian EXITS to the front desk by the entrance.

Immediately, half the other students settle into the seats for a long nap.

Paisley takes a copy of Moby Dick out of her bag and flips to the bookmark.

A folded note flies onto her desk.

She looks where it came from-- Kasey.

Paisley opens the note: **843-555-7741**

Paisley takes her cellphone from her purse and sends a text to the number on the note.

SUPER:

Paisley: Hi

Kasey: You really call Ms. Weaver a flat-chested bitch?!?!?

Paisley: Yes

Kasey: Nice

Kasey: Can't stand her

Kasey: She's a snob

Paisley smiles.

Paisley: Agreed

EXT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

The students from detention EXIT the building, having completed their time.

Paisley follows them out. As does Kasey, who catches up to her.

KASEY
 Hey.

PAISLEY
 Hi.

KASEY

So, wasn't that bad, right?

PAISLEY

No. But I can think of better ways to spend a Saturday.

KASEY

Yeah. You've got cheer and all that pageant shit.

PAISLEY

Not today.

KASEY

Right. 'Cause of detention... You drive here, or is your dad picking you up?

PAISLEY

I drove.

KASEY

Okay. Cool. 'Cause my mom, she's got my daughter for the next 2 hours for me, so if-if you want to, I don't know, hang out or something...

PAISLEY

Sure. I could actually use some company right now.

INT. PAISLEY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Paisley and Kasey sit in the front seat eating French fries and drinking milkshakes.

KASEY

She's just so fake! She acts like she's all for female empowerment and womanhood, but all she does is bully other women.

PAISLEY

She made fun of me for reading a romance novel.

KASEY

See? Romance and erotic novels are a billion dollar industry, predominantly created by women and supported by women.

(MORE)

KASEY (CONT'D)

How could she laugh at that instead of support it? She's one of those gross, liberal feminist that judge other women on their beliefs because they're not the same as hers.

PAISLEY

See, I don't think so. I think she picks on a certain type of girl because a certain type of girl used to pick on her.

KASEY

Could be it. But I stand by my fake feminist argument, too. I mean, she is from Seattle.

Paisley laughs.

PAISLEY

You look more like you're from Seattle than she does.

KASEY

Eh, well... You go through phases when a boy rapes you then gets you pregnant.

Paisley is in shock. She doesn't know how to respond to such a blunt, sudden piece of information.

KASEY (CONT'D)

Sorry. I know we were laughing and carrying on, but I've never told anyone that before. And I figured if I'm to say it out loud to anyone it should be you.

PAISLEY

Why?

KASEY

Because I got a sneaking suspicion you're the reason Tucker Hall is missing the top row of his teeth.

PAISLEY

Tucker did that to you? He's Terrah's daddy?

Tears well in Kasey's eyes. She nods.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

Does he know?

KASEY

I never told him, but he can't be that stupid. I'm sure he's figured it out.

PAISLEY

Why not tell him for sure?

KASEY

Because I don't want him near her.

PAISLEY

Understood.

KASEY

I know you two went on a date or two. Did he do that to you? Did he rape you?

PAISLEY

He thought he could. But he thought wrong.

KASEY

I should've fought back. Like you.

PAISLEY

Don't do that. Don't ever do that.

Paisley grabs a napkin from their fast food bag and dabs at the tears on Kasey's face.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

You and me, we're going to be friends now.

KASEY

Oh, really?

PAISLEY

Yes, ma'am. Which means you'll come to my house for dinner. And bring Terrah. Because I love babies.

KASEY

You're real nice. Always thought you were, but it's cool to find out I was right.

PAISLEY

I've been having a bad couple weeks. Except today. Today's been good.

KASEY

Is it because of a boy?

Paisley SIGHS and leans back into her seat.

PAISLEY

Ain't it always? I swear the dumbest thing women have ever done is fall in love with men.

KASEY

Amen.

They "clink" milkshake cups.

EXT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - DAY

The wind is HOWLING, kicking up a storm. The sky gray, green, and black as heavy rain falls; Hurricane headed their way.

Sheriff's department DEPUTIES usher RESIDENTS into the gymnasium as the storm picks up.

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - CONTINUOUS

Rows and rows of single cots take up significant space in the gym.

Kasey sits atop one, attempting to feed her daughter a spoonful of soup. While Rev. Douglass wanders from person-to-person, checking up on them.

FOOD LINE

Paisley, Birdie, Elaine, Trè, and Birdie's mother are at a long table aligned with a series of Crockpots, non-perishable snacks, and bottles of water. They ration them out to CITIZENS of Beaufort taking shelter.

The door opens to raging wind and torrential rain. Chris and Rebecca ENTER.

CHRIS' POV - PAISLEY

He takes notice of her. He catches her eyes and they exchange lovelorn looks for a moment...

Rev. Douglass approaches them.

REV. DOUGLASS

How are you two? Did you get your windows boarded up?

MS. WEAVER

Yes. We just came from my place. We boarded up Chris' house earlier this morning.

He notices her hands are a bit jittery.

MS. WEAVER (CONT'D)

Sorry. You'd think after living here for 6 years I'd be used to hurricane season by now.

REV. DOUGLASS

It doesn't get easier with time worrying about your safety and the safety of others. We have plenty of cots, lots of water, and food.

He points to the food line.

Rebecca sees Paisley handing out food and bottled water at the food line.

MS. WEAVER

No, thank you. At least not now. I think we'll just find a spot to breathe for a moment.

CHRIS

Well, I'd like to know if there's something I could do.

REV. DOUGLASS

Best person to ask would be the sheriff. I'm afraid I don't know where he is at the moment, but his wife, Elaine, and daughter, Paisley, are passing out soup at the food line if you want to ask them.

Chris and Rebecca exchange weary glances.

CHRIS

Yeah. Um, I-I'll ask his wife.

FOOD LINE

Chris approaches Elaine. Paisley is right beside her.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Elaine. How are you?

MAMA

Mr. Hogan, hello. Welcome to your first hurricane season in South Carolina. You get your house all boarded up and take pictures of everything?

CHRIS

I did. Thank you.

PAISLEY

Would you like something to eat?

MAMA

Oh! My manners. Mr. Hogan, this is my daughter, Paisley.

PAISLEY

We've met, mama. You had me bring him a Shoofly pie, remember?

MAMA

Oh, Lord. My memory. I swear sometimes I'd forget my own name if my husband didn't remind me.

CHRIS

To be fair, that was some time ago.

MAMA

Yes. How long has it been since I sold you that house? Nine months?

PAISLEY

Ten.

CHRIS

Ten.

MAMA

Still not long enough for me to lose my head.

CHRIS

I'm looking for your husband. The sheriff. I was wondering if there's anything I could do to help right now.

MAMA

Oh, my stars! That's so nice of you to volunteer.

(MORE)

MAMA (CONT'D)

I shouldn't be surprised though.
Paisley. Mr. Hogan is in the
military. Air Force, right?

PAISLEY

(fights back tears)
Excuse me, mama. I have to use the
bathroom.

Paisley EXITS, running off to the ladies room.

MAMA

She gets a little nervous during
storms. She's like a Labrador
sometimes. She'll be fine. I'll
show you where my husband is.

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL, GYMNASIUM - GIRLS' RESTROOM -
CONTINUOUS

Paisley is at the sinks, splashing cold water on her face.

She grabs some paper towels and dries her face.

OS, the door opens with a SQUEAK.

Rebecca ENTERS. She stands beside Paisley at the sinks.

PAISLEY

I am not in the mood for you.

MS. WEAVER

I didn't come in here to fight.

Paisley scoffs.

PAISLEY

You want to be friends now?

MS. WEAVER

No. I want to be civil.

PAISLEY

I offered you civility over cake
and tea.

MS. WEAVER

That wasn't civility. That was a
threat.

PAISLEY

I do believe I called it a
"warning."

MS. WEAVER
Same difference.

PAISLEY
Either way, you ignored me and here
is where we are.

MS. WEAVER
Exactly. I'm an adult fighting with
a child over a man. It's
embarrassing.

PAISLEY
For you.

MS. WEAVER
It should be for you, too.

PAISLEY
But it's not.

MS. WEAVER
Because you love him.

PAISLEY
I *do* love him.

MS. WEAVER
But does he love you?

Chris all but said he did. But he also told her not to repeat
it to anyone.

MS. WEAVER (CONT'D)
Exactly. Get a hobby, Paisley. Add
it to the million you already have.
Or a dog. A pet pig. Hell, I don't
care. Just busy yourself long
enough to eventually come to the
realization that your little
infatuation with Chris is just
that. Just a blip in your short,
teenage years that you won't even
remember once you get to college.
Just...grow the fuck up. For your
own sake, and everyone else's.

Rebecca fixes her hair in the mirror then takes out a tube of
lipstick from her purse.

PAISLEY
What is that?

She notices the lipstick is the exact same brand and shade she uses: **CANDY. APPLE. RED.**

MS. WEAVER

What's it look like? It's lip--

Paisley slaps Rebecca hard across the face; the lipstick smudging onto her cheek by the hit!

Rebecca is stunned. Speechless and scared.

Paisley storms out of the bathroom.

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

MS. WEAVER

She is completely unhinged and obsessive! Wild outbursts in class, slashing my tires, and now she's put her damn hands on me! Your daughter is out of control and needs serious help!

(to Chris)

Tell them!

Chris stares nervously at Hank and Elaine, not really wanting to tattle on Paisley to her parents.

MS. WEAVER (CONT'D)

Chris!

CHRIS

...Rebecca's right. Paisley...did those things. She has been rude to Rebecca.

MS. WEAVER

"Rude" doesn't even scratch the surface! She just assaulted me! I'm sorry sheriff but I'm going to have to press charges.

Chris readies to object--

MAMA

Okay, wait. Just hang on a minute. We probably don't need to take it that far.

MS. WEAVER

Oh, yeah? How should I react to someone putting their hands on me in public?

MAMA
She's a minor!

HANK'S POV - CHRIS

Hank pays close attention to how seasick Chris appears at this whole incident as his wife and Rebecca continue their back-and-forth...

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - HOME EC - CONTINUOUS

Hank ENTERS.

Paisley is on the other side of the room at a kitchenette station with her back to him.

He crosses the room to her.

DADDY
Paisley...?

She's balling her eyes out, wrecked with painful, quiet sobs.

He puts a gentle hand on her shoulder.

She turns to him and WAILS into his chest.

He holds her close, shushing her cries and rubbing her back in soothing circles.

DADDY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, pebble. I'm so sorry...

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Hank walks Paisley into the library under his arm. She clutches at him as though if she'd let go she'd sink to the floor.

TABLE

Chris, Rebecca, and Elaine sit at a table with quiet tension brewing between them.

Hank and Paisley approach them.

DADDY
Paisley has explained the entire situation to me. And there's something she'd like to say.

Paisley reluctantly detaches herself from her father.

Her eyes are bloodshot, face blotchy and pale.

PAISLEY

I am sorry, Ms. Weaver.

Rebecca rolls her eyes.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

I had no right to speak to you the way I have, to threaten you, or to hit you. My behavior is unacceptable. I'm... I'm sorry.

MS. WEAVER

Is that it?

PAISLEY

No. I...

(sniffles)

I'd like to apologize to Mr. Hogan as well. I've been really inappropriate with you. I was raised to be a woman who respected herself and I haven't been acting that way and I'm--

CHRIS

Please don't finish. You don't... I don't need anymore of an apology. It's fine.

MS. WEAVER

"It's fine?"

CHRIS

Yes, Rebecca. To me, it's fine. I'm fine. You want to blow this up into an even bigger mess, be my guest, but I'm not interested in that conversation right now. There's a fucking hurricane blowing through town and I'd rather go back to stacking sandbags and taping windows.

Chris EXITS.

Hank watches him go, brow furrowed in curiosity...

MAMA

I think Mr. Hogan is right. This is a serious matter that needs further discussion, but now's not the time unfortunately.

(MORE)

MAMA (CONT'D)

Perhaps we could set up a meeting
later with the four of us and
Principal Willis.

MS. WEAVER

And the school psychiatrist.
Because she is definitely
delusional.

Rebecca STORMS OUT of the library.

MAMA

My god, Paisley...

PAISLEY

I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry, mama.

Elaine holds her in her arms and lets her cry it out.

She and Hank exchange worried looks.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. MARTIN RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - DAY

TABLE

Paisley sits at one end of the table, fiddling with a pencil
nervously.

SUPER: One Month Later...

At the other end is a brunette woman, MISS SHARP, late 30s,
correcting an essay.

She finishes.

PAISLEY

Well, is it terrible?

Miss Sharp holds the essay up for Paisley to see the big red
A- on it.

Paisley SQUEALS, breaking from her chair to give Miss Sharp
an excited hug.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

You like it?

MISS SHARP

I think it's really good, Paisley. This essay, your math work, and your history project have all been exceptional. You're doing fantastic in your GED courses.

PAISLEY

So you think I'll pass the test?

MISS SHARP

You're a little weak in some spots, we'll work on them, but I just know you'll do great on the test. I think you'll pass with flying colors.

She takes Paisley's hand into hers.

MISS SHARP (CONT'D)

I am so proud of you.

Paisley smiles.

PAISLEY

Thank you, Miss Sharp.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Paisley and Elaine sit side-by-side reading their own magazines.

PAISLEY

Oh, mama, look at this recipe for Thai Chicken Salad.

She shows Elaine the recipe in the magazine she's reading.

MAMA

Mmm. That sounds good.

Paisley takes her phone from her purse and snaps a picture of the recipe in the magazine.

A side door opens and a TEEN GIRL in baggy sweats with long, stringy hair EXITS.

TEEN GIRL

(shy)

Hey.

PAISLEY

Hi, Samantha. Good session?

TEEN GIRL/SAMANTHA
Hard. But good.

SAMANTHA'S MOTHER approaches.

SAMANTHA
Well...see you.

PAISLEY
Bye.

Samantha and her mother EXIT.

An overweight woman with gray hair and a warm smile appears in the doorway-- DR. SARRAFIAN, 65.

DR. SARRAFIAN
Hi, Paisley. How are you, darling?

PAISLEY
I'm good, Dr. Sarrafian.

DR. SARRAFIAN
In a talking mood today? I got cake and tea.

PAISLEY
What kind of cake?

DR. SARRAFIAN
Red velvet. With white icing instead of cream cheese frosting.

PAISLEY
I'll answer any and every question you have for a slice of that cake.

Dr. Sarrafian laughs.

MAMA
Pay, honey. I got to show the house on Ginger Road to Ms. Rosa and her boyfriend. I'll be back before your session's over.

PAISLEY
Alright, mama.

Elaine pecks her cheek.

MAMA
Have a good hour.

Elaine EXITS.

DR. SARRAFIAN
Come on in here, gal. Let's gab.

Paisley ENTERS Dr. Sarrafian's office. The doctor closes the door.

EXT. SAFE HARBOR MARINA - CONTINUOUS

Paisley and Birdie sunbathe on a PONTOON in their bathing suits.

BIRDIE
I can't believe you're not coming back to school. It's bad enough you quit cheer and the pageant, but now you're not coming back at all.

PAISLEY
I know. But it's for the best. Trust me. Because the alternative is officially getting expelled and letting Ms. Weaver press charges. I couldn't do that to my mama and daddy. Homeschooling and getting my diploma early is best for everyone.

BIRDIE
Probably. I just hate that you aren't there. I swear I can't stand no one at that school except you and Trè.

Paisley sits up, giving her friend her full attention, as she slides her sunglasses to the top of her head.

PAISLEY
Birdie. Do me a favor?

BIRDIE
Hm?

PAISLEY
Be sweet to Kasey Devereaux at school.

BIRDIE
Kasey Devereaux?

PAISLEY
Yeah. She's real nice and could use a friend at school. I know she seems weird, but she's not. I promise.

BIRDIE

(sighs)

I'll try. Why Kasey Devereaux
though?

PAISLEY

She knows what I did to Tucker
Hall.

(off her look)

I wasn't crazy enough to tell her.
She put two-and-two together. But I
didn't exactly confirm anything
either. She really is nice though.
She's smart, too.

BIRDIE

Okay. You've sold me. I will make
friends with Kasey Devereux. But
speaking of Tucker Hall, he has not
said a word about you through all
this. Rumors are flying all over
the place and I thought for sure
he'd be the first to let his salted
tongue speak ill, but he's been as
quiet as a church mouse.

PAISLEY

Well, of course he has.

She lies back down, slipping her sunglasses back over her
eyes.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

He doesn't want to lose the bottom
row, too.

Birdie chuckles.

INT. CHARLESTON AIR FORCE BASE, CONTROL TOWER - CHRIS' OFFICE
- CONTINUOUS

Chris is at his desk completing paperwork and logs.

His cellphone VIBRATES atop his desk. Rebecca is calling.

CHRIS

(answers phone)

Hey.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION:

INT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

BED

Rebecca sits atop her bed and takes off her shoes, rubbing her feet.

MS. WEAVER
(on phone; whiny)
I really don't want to go to this thing tonight.

Chris chuckles.

CHRIS
You said 'yes'.

MS. WEAVER
Yeah, but I didn't know what I was thinking.

CHRIS
They were in a bind and you thought to be helpful.

MS. WEAVER
What if I just didn't go?

CHRIS
You can't screw them over like that.

MS. WEAVER
Yeah, but what if I did?

Chris pushes his work aside, giving her his full attention.

CHRIS
What's this really about, Rebecca?

MS. WEAVER
...Nothing.

CHRIS
Real convincing "nothing."

MS. WEAVER
It's not about anything. I-I'm just being lazy. Today was a long day. The last two weeks of school are typically annoying and stressful. I want to take a long, hot bath and read a book but I can't.

(MORE)

MS. WEAVER (CONT'D)

That's all. I'm just...not in the mood. And I wish you were coming with me.

CHRIS

Can't. Sorry. Work.

MS. WEAVER

I know.

CHRIS

But you can call me afterward. Tell me how it went.

MS. WEAVER

Oh, you are definitely getting all the hot pageant gossip.

CHRIS

I look forward to it.

MS. WEAVER

Guess I should start getting ready. I'll call you later.

CHRIS

Yeah.

MS. WEAVER

Okay. Love you. Bye.

CHRIS

...Yeah. Bye.

Chris hangs up.

As indicated by the frown on her face, Rebecca is disappointed he didn't say 'I love you' back.

INT. THE BEAUFORT PLAYHOUSE THEATER - NIGHT, CONTINUOUS

AUDIENCE

Paisley sits with Trè, Rev. Douglass, Birdie's parents, and her own family. She and Trè grip each other's hand tightly. Eyes on the stage.

STAGE

Birdie and Teenage Girl #2 hold hands as they wait for the winner to be announced.

They're both in their evening gowns; Birdie's a long, beautiful African print dress. She's flawless, stunning.

The other CONTESTANTS are lined up behind them, posed in their evening gowns with toothpaste-white smiles.

JUDGES' TABLE

Rebecca sits with TWO other JUDGES. They each write something down on a slip of paper and place the paper in an envelope.

The envelope is then passed to Miss Peaches who hands it to the cheer coach on stage.

STAGE

The cheer coach opens the envelope.

COACH

And the runner up is... Jenny
Buckner! Which means Imogene
Jackson is your new Miss Teen South
Carolina!

The other girl is visibly disappointed, but Birdie has tears in her eyes as Miss Peaches presents her with a crown, sash, and flowers.

AUDIENCE

Paisley and Trè are over-the-top excited. The whole audience CHEERS and APPLAUDS but the two of them are a bit excessive.

However, it's endearing, just how happy they are for her.

JUDGE'S TABLE

REBECCA'S POV - AUDIENCE

Rebecca watches Paisley jump up and down with excitement for Birdie, scowling and glaring in her direction.

INT. FINE DINING RESTAURANT - PRIVATE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

TABLE

Hank, Elaine, Rev. Douglass, and Birdie's parents talk amongst themselves with a bottle of wine in the middle of them.

Paisley, Birdie, and Trè look over their menus. Birdie is still wearing her pageant gown, sash, and crown.

Kasey approaches the table in a server uniform.

PAISLEY
(gasps)
You got the job!

KASEY
Yeah. You guys are my first table
tonight.

PAISLEY
I am so proud and so honored.

KASEY
Don't make it a whole big
something, when it's nothing.

PAISLEY
Don't you attempt to be humble in
front of me Kasey Devereaux.

Kasey rolls her eyes.

KASEY
I see you won, Birdie.
Congratulations.

BIRDIE
Thanks.

KASEY
How pissed off was Jenny Buckner?

BIRDIE
The look on her sour face will be
scorched into my memory until I am
old, dead, and buried.

KASEY
Speaking of horrible members of the
female species, guess who's in here
picking up take-out with their
boyfriend? Ms. Weaver.

PAISLEY'S POV - HOST STAND

Paisley looks out into the main dining room. She spots
Rebecca and Chris at the host stand collecting their order.

For the briefest of moments, she and Chris lock eyes...

She quickly turns her attention back to her menu.

KASEY (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Can you believe that good-looking man chooses to sleep with that witch?

PAISLEY

To each his own, I guess... You know what I want? The shrimp and grits.

KASEY

That's a good dish.

BIRDIE

Me, too.

Birdie takes Paisley's hand and gives it a little squeeze. Paisley squeezes right back.

Paisley looks up, into the main dining room again-- Chris and Rebecca are gone.

INT. MARTIN RESIDENCE - PAISLEY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Paisley wakes up to her cellphone RINGING off the hook on her nightstand.

Birdie's calling.

Paisley grabs the phone.

PAISLEY

(yawns; answers phone)

What is it, B--

BIRDIE (V.O.)

(through phone)

Ms. Weaver is dead!

CUT TO:

EXT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

FRONT PORCH

Chris is talking with Hank as PARAMEDICS wheel Rebecca's covered body out of the house.

PAISLEY (V.O.)

What? What happened?

BIRDIE (V.O.)
They found her on her bedroom
floor, naked and dead.

NEIGHBORS crowd around in shock WHISPERING to one another.

PAISLEY (V.O.)
How in the hell did she die?

Giselle and her twins, Gemma and Ginny, watch from their porch across the street as paramedics cart Rebecca's body into an ambulance.

BIRDIE (V.O.)
I don't know. But Giselle, Ginny,
and Gemma said your dad is over
there now. Talking to Chris.

PAISLEY (V.O.)
He would never.

BIRDIE (V.O.)
I think it's just protocol, Pay.
Especially given he's the one that
found her.

Chris looks despondent as Hank escorts him to his car.

PAISLEY (V.O.)
Oh, my God! He must be devastated.

BIRDIE (V.O.)
I know what you're thinking, Pay,
but don't go over there.

PAISLEY (V.O.)
I'm not. I swear.

A LOCAL NEWS CREW shows up.

The REPORTER tries sticking a mic in Hank and Chris' face,
but Hank bats her away.

He and Chris climb into his vehicle and follow the ambulance.

BIRDIE (V.O.)
Good. But see if you can get some
info from your dad.

PAISLEY (V.O.)
Okay. I will.

BIRDIE (V.O.)
You okay?

PAISLEY (V.O.)
Yeah. I'm fine.

The reporter interviews neighbors hanging around Rebecca's house.

Giselle and her sisters fly off their porch and cross the street, wanting to be interviewed next.

BIRDIE (V.O.)
Okay. Call me later. Or just come over.

PAISLEY (V.O.)
Okay. See you soon.

BIRDIE (V.O.)
'Kay, bye.

PAISLEY (V.O.)
Bye.

They hang up.

INT. COMMERCIAL AIRPLANE - DAY

Chris has a window seat. The whole row to himself, lucky dog. But he doesn't look so lucky in his black suit, gobbling a whiskey on the rocks.

He loosens his tie and runs an exhausted hand through his hair.

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - NIGHT, CONTINUOUS

FRONT DOOR

Chris ENTERS with a suitcase and something in his hand. He flicks on the lights and locks the door behind him.

He tosses his keys in the key bowl, along with the thing in his hand: a program from Rebecca's funeral, with her picture splashed on the front.

He toes off his shoes and abandons his suitcase as he heads upstairs.

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chris ENTERS the room from the adjoining master bath; hair damp, with a towel wrapped around his waist.

He freezes.

CHRIS' POV - CORNER

His suitcase is tucked into a corner... And the black suit he was wearing is hanging up neatly on the closet door...

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

STAIRS

Chris cautiously descends the stairs in a T-shirt and jeans.

The dress shoes he left by the door are neatly placed on a shoe rack that wasn't there before.

Beside his shoes are a pair of heels...

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Paisley is at the stove cooking dinner. She looks familiar, comfortable, as she busies about the kitchen. As though this is where she makes dinner every night.

Chris ENTERS.

Paisley opens the fridge and grabs a beer. She caps it with a bottle opener and places it on the counter in front of Chris.

PAISLEY

Dinner out back in 15 minutes.

(long beat)

CHRIS

What are you making?

PAISLEY

Apple Cider-glazed salmon with
roasted asparagus.

He grabs the beer.

CHRIS

Sounds good.

Chris EXITS.

Paisley returns to cooking with a small smile on her lips.

EXT. CHRIS' HOUSE - BACK PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Paisley and Chris sit, barefoot and relaxed, at a candlelit table in the warm night of the approaching summer.

Chris finishes the last bit of his dinner.

PAISLEY

Good?

CHRIS

Very. Sorry I finished before you.

PAISLEY

It's okay. I'm not that hungry.
I'll finish the rest later. Want
dessert?

CHRIS

I want to talk instead.

PAISLEY

...We talked. We talked all through
dinner. We're talking now--

CHRIS

You know exactly what conversation
needs to be had.

PAISLEY

Do I?

CHRIS

If you're going to continue being
cute I'm just going to shut this
whole thing down and send you home
right now.

That's the last thing she wants, so attempting to be insolent is cancelled. But she will be smug:

PAISLEY

How was the funeral?

CHRIS

Awkward. Thanks for forcing that on
me. How's therapy been?

PAISLEY

Lovely. I enjoy pretending to
suffer from erotomania and faking
mental break throughs like a crazy
person for a whole damn month.

CHRIS

You slapped her. It was therapy or juvenile detention, Paisley.

PAISLEY

Well, now I don't have to go anymore.

CHRIS

Lucky you.

Paisley angrily breaks from her chair and collects both their plates.

He grabs her arm, halting her.

PAISLEY

I'm getting dessert.

He takes the plates from her hands and puts them back onto the table, then pulls her into his lap.

CHRIS

I don't want to fight with you.

She twists around to straddle his legs.

PAISLEY

I don't want to fight with you either.

His eyes wander over her face, not searching, but analyzing... She's beautiful. But crazy. Over him. And he weirdly can't help but love how much she loves him.

CHRIS

Don't ever tell me what happened.

PAISLEY

Don't ever make me feel that small again.

He caresses her face.

CHRIS

...I'm sorry.

PAISLEY

I'm sorry, too.

They kiss, hungry and wanton, with their hands all over each other.

Chris holds onto Paisley as he breaks from his chair and carries her into the house.

INT. MARTIN RESIDENCE - DEN - CONTINUOUS

Hank works on a crossword puzzle, sipping a beer, as the TV softly plays ESPN.

OS, the back door CLOSES shut.

Hank puts the crossword down.

DADDY
Pebble?

Paisley appears in the doorway.

PAISLEY
Hi, daddy.

DADDY
So?

She falls against the door frame and sinks to the floor with a dreamy smile.

PAISLEY
I love him.

DADDY
Well, I know that.

PAISLEY
Where's mama?

DADDY
Still at her book club. I suspect she'll call me drunk as a skunk off strawberry wine in an hour, asking me to come get her.

PAISLEY
And Newt?

DADDY
He's upstairs in the game room watching a documentary about hydropower energy.

Paisley jumps up and closes the door. She hops onto the couch beside Hank.

PAISLEY

He knows.

FLASHBACK

INT. BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - HOME EC ROOM - DAY

We're back in the Home Ec room on the day of the storm.

Paisley is pacing up and down the room as Hank sits at a workstation at the front of the class.

PAISLEY

He told me, daddy. That's what he said. I swear.

DADDY

I believe you, pebble. I'm just asking if there's a possibility that he's playing games with you.

Paisley stops pacing.

PAISLEY

He's not. I kissed him and he kissed me back. But he got all nervous, like a cat in a room full of rocking chairs, then started dating *her*.

DADDY

What for?

PAISLEY

I don't know. To prove to himself he ain't a dirty ol' man?

DADDY

Forty ain't old.

PAISLEY

Too old for me, he figures.

DADDY

Is that what all this is about? My mama was 17 years old when she married my pa.

PAISLEY

How old was granddaddy?

DADDY

Twenty-eight, I think. All Mr. Hogan had to do was come and talk to me about you.

PAISLEY

I tried to tell him that but he wouldn't let me. And now he's with her. And she's making me seem crazy.

She runs to him for a hug.

DADDY

Don't you worry about Ms. Weaver. We'll take care of her. I'll think of something.

She lifts her head from his shoulder and wipes at her wet eyes.

PAISLEY

...What if I already thought of something?

DADDY

Like what?

INT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - MORNING

Rebecca gets out of the shower and grabs a towel. She wraps it around her body and wipes the condensation off the mirror.

She grabs her toothbrush and puts toothpaste on it, brushing her teeth.

(3 beats)

A BEE buzzes in front of her face. She backs up, swatting at it and moving from it's path.

She tries to open the door to flee but she can't. It's somehow locked from the outside.

Rebecca grabs a hand towel and whacks the bee with it. It lands limp onto the counter.

She smirks, victorious.

But then another BEE buzzes around her head. She tries avoiding it, shifting around the room and swatting at it with the towel.

DOOR

Beneath the door more and more BEES slip inside the bathroom through the crack.

She SHRIEKS!

She covers her head with the hand towel and tries the door again. It still won't budge.

She's getting stung left and right.

She opens one of the drawers, looking for something but it's not there.

She's going into shock; swelling up with labored breaths.

She gives up on the drawer and stumbles to the door. This time it opens and she falls onto the floor.

She's blotchy with welts, half her face swollen and blistered. She's struggling to breathe as she crawls across the floor toward her vanity.

Her purse is on the chair.

REBECCA'S POV - PURSE

Hanging out of her purse is an Epi-Pen.

She's nearly there, almost within reach--

A gloved HAND grabs it before she does.

The **CANDY APPLE RED** lipstick is taken, too.

SOCKED FEET step over Rebecca's limp body and EXIT the bedroom.

Rebecca's breaths come slowly, faint...

Until she's lifeless on the carpeted floor, half-naked and alone.

INT. HOSPITAL - MORGUE - DAY

Hank and his young DEPUTY stand on one side of a metal table Rebecca's body lies on.

On the other side is a middle-aged woman, the CORONOR, in a lab coat with round eyeglasses on the end of her nose.

CORONOR
 Looks like anaphylactic shock.
 (reads chart)
 Seems she was allergic to bees. And
 stung multiple times.

DEPUTY
 There was a fallen bee hive on the
 side of the house.

DADDY
 Same side her bedroom was on?

DEPUTY
 Yes, sir.

DADDY
 And the bedroom window was open?

The deputy checks his notes.

DEPUTY
 Yes, sir.

DADDY
 (sighs)
 Seems to me she tried getting rid
 of the hive, scared she'd get
 stung, and it only agitated them.
 Shame.

The coronor *tsks*.

CORONOR
 What a sad way to go for such a
 young woman.

Hank and his deputy nod solemnly.

The coroner pulls the sheet over Rebecca's face.

EXT. SAFE HARBOR MARINA - DAY

Paisley is at one end of the pontoon while Birdie is at the
 other dancing to the music playing in her headphones.

With Birdie distracted, Paisley takes a brick from her purse.

Two Epi-Pens are rubberband-ed several times around it.

She drops the brick into the water, watching it sink.

She looks over her shoulder at Birdie; her friend still dancing, in her own world, none the wiser.

BACK TO:

INT. MARTIN RESIDENCE - DEN - CONTINUOUS

PAISLEY

I didn't admit anything. And he don't want details.

DADDY

But he's not stupid.

PAISLEY

Right.

DADDY

What's he want to do about the two of you then?

PAISLEY

He wants to talk to you.

DADDY

But what does he want?

PAISLEY

(smiles)

To marry me. He tried to talk me into waiting 2 years, but I just can't. So he wants to sit down with you. And mama.

DADDY

If you say he's a good man, than I believe you, but your mama's going to need some convincing. We're going to have to work on her. It'll take some time, but I think the three of us can wear her down after a few months.

PAISLEY

You think so? Because mama can be like a stone at the bottom of the ocean sometimes; unmoving and there forever.

DADDY

Which is why we're going to have to kill her with the utmost kindness.

(MORE)

DADDY (CONT'D)

Your boy's got to be as charming as they come and we got to talk him up like he's the Second Coming. Make it seem like you're soulmates.

PAISLEY

We are.

DADDY

Then it won't be a hard sell, will it?

She SQUEALS and wraps her arms around his neck, hugging the life out of him.

PAISLEY

I know we can do it.

DADDY

In the meantime, you're going to have to keep a little distance between the two of you. Tonight was risky enough.

PAISLEY

But daddy--

DADDY

Don't want you caught sneaking around with him before we get a chance to narrate the story of the two of you. You know how people talk. Blows the whole plan up. You want this man or not?

PAISLEY

I do.

DADDY

Then no more fooling around until your mama approves.

She huffs.

PAISLEY

Fine, I guess.

DADDY

One more thing: he's got to come bow hunting with me.

PAISLEY

Oh, daddy, I don't know. Chris ain't much for hunting.

(MORE)

PAISLEY (CONT'D)

But he goes fly fishing in Alaska every summer. Leaving to go this August.

DADDY

Fly fishing, huh? My uncle Dell used to go fly fishing. Took me and your auntie Ruth once. I liked it. Wouldn't mind a talk over catching some fish.

She kisses his cheek. She settles onto the couch next to him.

He picks his crossword puzzle back up.

PAISLEY

Can I call him?

DADDY

I don't see why not.

She smiles happily.

PAISLEY

Good.

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - DAY

FRONT DOOR

SUPER: A Year and a Half Later...

The whole place is decorated tastefully in *ombre* hues of blue, gray, and white. There's an elephant motif to the party decorations, and a banner reading: IT'S A BOY!

The doorbell RINGS.

Kasey rushes to answer the door. On the other side are Birdie's parents. Birdie's mother holds a gorgeous blue cake in her hands. Atop it is an adorable, fondant elephant holding a balloon.

KASEY

Oh, thank God, you got the cake.

BIRDIE'S MOTHER

(entering)

Sorry. I wanted to make sure it was perfect.

Birdie's father follows inside with two large boxes of cupcakes.

Kasey directs them to the dessert table in the LIVING ROOM.

GUESTS mill about socializing. Amongst them are: the cheer squad, girls from the pageant, ladies from church, Miss Peaches, Miss Sharp, the home ec teacher, Mrs. Peverley, and her cheer coach.

Elaine passes out flutes of champagne to the adults, and ones with orange juice to anyone underage.

Birdie is on the couch playing with Kasey's daughter.

Paisley ENTERS in a long, baby blue dress. She's 8 months pregnant.

She SQUEALS at the adorable cake.

PAISLEY
It's perfect. Thank you.

BIRDIE'S MOTHER
You're welcome, sweetheart.

She and Birdie's mother hug.

BIRDIE'S FATHER
Uh, so where's all the--

PAISLEY
Exactly where you think they are.
In the den.

Birdie's father passes the cupcakes off to Kasey.

He pecks Paisley's cheek.

BIRDIE'S FATHER
You look lovely.

He EXITS for the den.

BIRDIE'S MOTHER
What's going on in there?

PAISLEY
Panthers/Falcons game.

The doorbell RINGS again. Kasey rushes off to answer it.

(long beat)

Samantha and her mother ENTER with Kasey. Samantha holds a large, wrapped gift. She's all smiles and in a pretty dress.

PAISLEY (CONT'D)
Samantha! You made it!

Kasey takes the gift from Samantha and puts it on the gift table.

Paisley hugs the shy girl.

SAMANTHA
Thank you for inviting me. Sorry I missed your wedding.

PAISLEY
Well, that's alright. You're here now.

SAMANTHA'S MOTHER
Everything looks so pretty.

PAISLEY
Oh, that's all Kasey and my mama.

SAMANTHA
Can we help with anything?

MAMA
All done actually. Kasey's going to round up the boys now.

Kasey cracks her knuckles.

KASEY
Been waiting an hour for this.

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - DEN - CONTINUOUS

The room is full of MEN drinking beer and watching the game on the wide screen TV. Amongst them are: Chris, Hank, Newt, Rev. Douglass, Trè, Beaufort High's principal, and Chris' male co-workers/fellow AIRMEN.

Kasey bursts into the room like a force to be reckoned with. She walks right to the TV and shuts it off.

They bitch and MOAN at her.

KASEY
Excuse me, gentlemen, but the baby shower starts now. This room is off-limits for the next 3 hours. Food is in the kitchen, buffet-style. Help yourself. But the potato salad is gross, so don't bother.

(MORE)

KASEY (CONT'D)

Thank you.
 (claps hands)
 Let's go!

The men file out of the room.

EXT. DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chris EXITS the den.

PAISLEY

Good game?

CHRIS

Very. Until that scary girl you're friends with busted in the room like a drill sergeant.

PAISLEY

Kasey. Her name is Kasey. For the 100th time. Be nice to her and make sure you say 'thank you' for all her hard work.

He playfully bites her neck.

CHRIS

Yes, ma'am.

Speak of the Devil, Kasey approaches them.

KASEY

Alright, you two. Pictures.

PAISLEY

Now? But I'm so hungry I could eat a dead skunk.

KASEY

Won't take long. Promise.

Chris takes her hand.

CHRIS

Come on, Mrs. Hogan. We'll take a picture or two and then you can have all the hushpuppies and fried okra you want.

LIVING ROOM

Kasey leads them to a tufted chair in front of a blue background with balloons and a giant elephant plushie.

Chris sits in the chair and Paisley sits on his lap.

Kasey stands beside Trè, who's behind a professional camera on a tripod.

Chris WHISPERS something in Paisley's ear, making her GIGGLE.

Trè snaps a picture of their candid moment.

TRÈ

That was good. Let's get one of you
looking at each other.

Paisley stares at him with loving eyes.

This is everything she's ever wanted.

He's everything she's ever wanted. She couldn't ask to be any
happier.

PAISLEY

Hi.

He smiles back at her.

CHRIS

Hi.

They lean in close, lips grazing, ready for a kiss--

Trè snaps their picture.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END.