

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

"God Bless The Child"

Written by

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BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

"God Bless The Child"

CHARACTERS

VINCENT
CATHERINE
FATHER

LENA
MARY
ZACH
SAMANTHA
MAURICE

BITS AND EXTRAS

TUNNEL CHILDREN
TUNNEL PEOPLE
LADY
SALVATION ARMY SANTA
SKATERS
PRETZEL VENDORS
DINER PATRONS
WAITRESS
CRISIS CENTER COUNSELORS
LENA'S BABY DAUGHTER
STREET PEOPLE
HOOKERS
CRACK DEALERS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

"God Bless The Child"

SETS

INTERIOR

CRISIS INTERVENTION CENTER (N)

OLYMPIAD DINER (N)

CATHY'S SUB-BASEMENT (D)

CATHY'S CAR (N)

346 AVENUE C (N)

-Top Floor Landing

FURNISHED ROOM (N)

TUNNELS

-Stretches Of Tunnels

FATHER'S CHAMBER

-Entrance

-Outside Father's Chamber

LENA'S CHAMBER

CHAMBER OF THE FALLS (MATTE)

-Small Pond

VINCENT'S CHAMBER

EXTERIOR

FIFTH AVENUE (N) -
Rockefeller Plaza

OLYMPIAD DINER (N)

CATHY'S TERRACE (N)

STREETS OF NEW YORK (N)

346 AVENUE C (N)

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

"God Bless The Child"

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

SALVATION ARMY SANTA

ringing his bell before Macy's, a light snow falling around him,
against the night sky...

VARIOUS DISSOLVES

of a late Christmas-season night in New York: snow-capped,
decorated Fifth Avenue, skaters and pretzel vendors crowding
Rockefeller Plaza. Over this, in ironic counterpoint to the
holiday scenes, we hear the low, halting, disembodied voice of
a young woman, filtered, as if on a telephone line.

WOMAN (OVER)

I don't know what's happening to me...
I'm on the street... I keep moving...
but it's like I'm invisible, you know?
Like if I'm not around tomorrow,
believe me, no one's even gonna notice.
I just can't.. .

The voice breaks off, as we:

CUT TO:

INT. CRISIS INTERVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

CLOSE ON CATHERINE

cradling a telephone receiver, listening carefully, her voice
measured, sympathetic. She sits at one of fifty desks manned
by crisis counselors, and there's the relentless ringing of
telephones...

CATHY

I'm listening...

But there's only silence.

CATHY

What's your name?

(CONTINUED)

WOMAN (OVER)
(pause)
Lena...

CATHY
Lena... Are you alone right now?

LENA (OVER)
I'm always alone...

CATHY
Do you feel safe?

Silence.

CATHY
Lena?

LENA (OVER)
Look, just forget it, okay? It doesn't
matter...

CATHY
It does matter.

LENA (OVER)
No, you're wrong... I just want it to be
over.

CATHY
Lena, please: don't hang up.

Cathy prays not to hear that click.

CATHY
You still there?

LENA (OVER)
(beat)
I'm here.

CATHY
Think, Lena. There must be someplace you
can go... a friend you can talk to...
someone.

All that comes over the line is the static.

CATHY
Then there are churches, shelters. Don't
give up. I can give you addresses. There
are people out there who want to help.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LENA (OVER)
I 've tried... I can't do it
anymore.

CATHY
Yes you can.

LENA (OVER)
God, I'm scared...

Cathy looks down at her desk, to which a sign has been
scotch-taped: CRISIS COUNSELORS PLEASE REMEMBER: EFFECTIVE
INTERVENTION, NOT PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT. Cathy runs her fingers
over the yellowing tape. Then she checks her watch: 11:45.

CATHY
My shift is over in about fifteen
minutes. Can you meet me for a cup
of coffee?
(off the following
silence)
How does that sound?

Lena (OVER)
I don't know.

CATHY
Where are you calling from?

LENA (OVER)
(beat)
Broadway... down by Twelfth.

CATHY
We can just talk if you want,
that's all. Okay?

LENA (OVER)
Yeah, okay...

CATHY
Good. I know a diner two blocks from
where you are...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

A lip of snow upon the sill of the frosted window THROUGH WHICH WE SEE a scattering of late-night patrons -- and Cathy, sitting at a booth, a steaming cup of coffee before her. LENA ENTERS FRAME, though we see only her back as she peers into the warm diner.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER

Cathy looks up as Lena enters the restaurant, hugging herself from the cold. We discover with Cathy that Lena is days away from giving birth. Barely twenty, hers is a strange and alluring, almost fawn-like beauty .. an amalgam of streetwise toughness, innocence, and pain. The two women recognize each other at once. Lena moves toward Cathy...

CATHY

Lena?

Lena nods, a little awkward.

CATHY

Come on, sit down.

Lena takes a moment before easing into the booth opposite Cathy. A WAITRESS appears, holding a pot of hot coffee...

WAITRESS

(to Lena)

Coffee?

LENA

Can I have some soup?

(to Cathy)

Is that okay?

CATHY

Of course.

LENA

(to waitress)

Vegetable...

Cathy nods to the waitress, who moves off. Cathy regards Lena.

CATHY

I'm glad you came.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LENA
Free cup of soup, right?

CATHY
Sure, why not?
(then)
I know it's hard, opening up to a
stranger... I have a tough time with
that myself. But you sounded like...

Cathy stops herself, at a loss. And this kind of intimacy is difficult for Lena... though she begins to respond to Cathy at some level.

CATHY
Look, I'm not exactly sure why I'm
here... or what I can do. I'm not
a cop, and I'm not here to judge
you. You can tell me what's on
your mind, or if you want, we can
just sit...

After a long moment:

LENA
You never told me your name.

CATHY
Cathy. Cathy Chandler.

On Cathy's smile, we:

DISSOLVE TO:

6 LATER

6

Lena's hard veneer has fallen away; she's beginning to open up...

LENA
I did what I had to...

She looks down.

CATHY
You don't know who the father is...

LENA
(ashamed)
No...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

6.

CATHY

It's okay.

LENA

Then how come it feels so bad?

CATHY

Lena ...

LENA

It's gonna grow up to be just like me.
When I think of that...

Lena breaks off, shaking her head at the hopelessness.
After a moment:

CATHY

Your baby is all about what can be,
not what is.

Lena isn't buying. She looks away.

CATHY

If you don't believe it, then nobody
will. I'm not saying it's easy,
because it isn't. But it is
possible.

LENA

Don't tell me that... you don't know.

A tough moment for Cathy.

CATHY

You're right. I don't.

LENA

Things don't change... not on the
street.

A long beat. Lena looks away.

LENA

You look in the houses... You can
see what it's like inside... the
lights, the Christmas tree.
People talking and laughing. And
you get a cold feeling being
outside, like it'll never be you
in there --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

All this has stirred up emotional stuff within Lena. Cathy feels Lena's pain and hopelessness, but is unable to say anything more. The two women sit in silence, beyond words...

CUT TO:

EXT. CATHERINE'S TERRACE - NIGHT

Catherine tries to find language for the impotence she feels... for the injustice inherent in the world. Vincent watches her with deepening love.

CATHY

It was something in her voice... I don't know. A calling out... to be a part of something. To belong. She's really just a girl... Alone. In a dangerous city. And it's Christmas.

VINCENT

So many come into your life, Catherine... so few can touch you as this girl has touched you.

CATHY

She's carrying a child.

VINCENT

A child...

CATHY

She said she'd rather see the baby die than bring another life into the world.

VINCENT

Has her world nothing more to offer?

Cathy shakes her head.

CATHY

She's tried too many times... and been beaten down.

VINCENT

She's unable to break the cycle of her life.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHY

I've talked to a dozen social workers at a dozen shelters, but I don't think...

(she breaks off, shakes her head)

I know she won't respond. She doesn't have the strength anymore... or the hope.

VINCENT

Then she has lost her way...

CATHY

Vincent, I'm afraid to think what might happen if I leave her alone. She's so far away from herself.

Vincent regards Cathy, a new wave of admiration washing over him.

CATHY

I broke every rule by going to see her.

VINCENT

Then perhaps Father can break a few rules of his own.

CUT TO:

INT. CATHY'S SUB-BASEMENT - DAY

A place of transition, a place between worlds. FATHER interviews Lena with close, sympathetic scrutiny. They are both seated on a stone ledge ... Cathy standing beside the girl.

FATHER

You were a prostitute?

LENA

Yeah.

She doesn't avoid Father's eyes.

FATHER

Was there nothing else for you to do?

Lena is silent. Father responds sympathetically to Lena's taciturnity.

(CONTINUED)

FATHER

What has Catherine told you about
where we live?

LENA

She told me it's a secret place...
where people live together and take
care of each other. I thought she was
making it up.

FATHER

(smiles)

She's not making it up. It's true. We
have made a life for ourselves down
here. We've built... a home. And we
do try to look after one another.

CATHY

But each of us is also responsible for
keeping this place safe from those
who wouldn't understand.

Lena tries to understand herself, groping... Then:

LENA

I can keep a secret.

FATHER

Whatever may happen?

LENA

Whatever happens.

FATHER

Good. Now I'm going to ask you a
difficult question.

Lena looks up at Catherine, who offers her silent
encouragement.

(CONTINUED)

FATHER

(earnest)

Ordinarily, there is a process by which people come to live with us. It's a slow and gradual process. Our helpers above, like Catherine, act as our eyes and ears, judging need... and trustworthiness. Sometimes, as with you, we are forced to make exceptions. But still we must ask: why should we risk everything we have worked so hard to create? Why should we trust you?

Lena bows her head, hesitating. It's clear she doesn't feel worthy... Finally:

LENA

I Don't know...

FATHER

(gently)

Please, try and answer... otherwise, I have no choice

CATHY

(to Lena)

It's all right. Just tell him what you're feeling.

Lena looks up, her eyes flashing.

LENA

What I'm feeling? I'm feeling you got no reasons to trust me... and I should save you the trouble and walk outta here myself. But I got someone else to think of now. And it's not fair my baby's gotta suffer, just 'cause its unlucky enough to get stuck inside of me 'stead of someone else. You give my baby a chance at something better... I won't mess it up.

FATHER

Stand up, Lena.

Lena stands. Father reaches out and grasps her by the shoulders

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED: (3)

8

FATHER

Don't be frightened. You spoke
your heart. I want to welcome you.

She turns to Cathy, who is smiling.

CATHY

Good luck, Lena. And don't worry.
I'll see you soon.

FATHER

Come...

Lena looks back at Cathy once before following being led by
Father into the golden light around the bend, as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

9 INT. TUNNELS - DAY

9

Father leads Lena down this seemingly endless stretch, to the
constant, rhythmic echoing of the pipes...

LENA

What's that sound?

FATHER

It's how we communicate with one
another... tapping on the pipes.

LENA

Come on... really?

FATHER

Really.

Lena can hardly believe it. Her smile is turned inside out
by a sharp contraction... and another. She stumbles, and
Father moves to support her. He eases her down upon a narrow
ledge...

FATHER

Breath deeply... into the pain.

Father waits as Lena breathes; then, using his cane, he taps
a syncopated emergency code on one of the parallel pipes
that run along the tunnel wall. And we:

CUT TO:

10 INT. FATHER'S CHAMBER - DAY

10

Lena sits as Father removes the stethoscope bell from her belly, unplugging his own ears. Mary stands beside Lena, holding her hand.

FATHER

False alarm. But the baby's heart is strong and regular.

MARY

Come, I'll take you to your chamber. It's a stone's throw from mine, so I'll be close when you're ready.

Lena nods tentatively, rising with Mary's support.

MARY

And don't worry: I've delivered a hundred babies.

Just then, a ten year old girl, SAMANTHA, races into Father's Chamber, clutching what looks like a blob of clay with several finger holes, set with common stones as ornaments.

FATHER

Haven't you ever heard of knocking before you come in?

SAMANTHA

(contrite)

Sorry...

(then, quickly)

Look what I made for Vincent.

MARY

It's beautiful. What is it?

Samantha regards Mary with impatience, as though the answer to her question was self-evident.

SAMANTHA

A penholder...

FATHER

Of course. What else? And I happen to know, it's just the thing Vincent needs.

MARY

And he'll cherish it all the more because you made it with your own hands...

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

Samantha is beaming as she starts to leave...

SAMANTHA

I'm giving it to him right now.

FATHER

Samantha.

The girl stops, turns...

FATHER

This is Lena. She's a new friend.

Samantha lifts her hand.

SAMANTHA

(to Lena)

Hi... Bye...

And she's off.

LENA

Who's Vincent?

Father exchanges a quick look with Mary...

FATHER

(to Lena, evasive)

He's one of us. Go now, child, and rest.

Lena follows Mary from Father's chamber, and on Father's lingering look, we:

CUT TO:

11 INT. LENA'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

11

Utilitarian, but warm and comfortable, with an antique crib in the corner by the bed where Lena lies, unable to sleep. The distant sound of Christmas carols drifts into her chamber. She rises, covering herself with the garments from the tunnel world that she has been given (NOTE: from this point on, her clothing will reflect this). She wanders out of her chamber...

CUT TO:

12 LENA

12

continuing down a shadowy tunnel stretch, toward the amber light up ahead... toward the crescendoing sound of the Christmas carols. She comes to:

13 FATHER'S CHAMBER

13

where two dozen like some choir children are singing "Little Drummer Boy" keeping herself angels. Lena pauses at the entrance, hidden. From where she stands, all she can see is the group of children. She starts forward, but for some reason, cannot bring herself to enter, lingering instead, listening to the sweet sounds. A wave of emotion washes over her, and she leans heavily against the wall just outside the chamber. Outside, where she has always been. She starts to cry softly, but the sounds carry her to a deeper pain, and soon she is sobbing, sinking slowly to the ground...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

14 ON LENA 14

drying her tears. The Christmas carols have stopped, and now she hears a bright, familiar voice...

ZACH (O.S.)
Please, Father.

KIPPER (O.S.)
You promised.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
Tell us the story about how
Vincent was found.

From inside the room: a CHORUS of enthusiasm from the children, "yeah" and "tell us that one." At the mention of Vincent's name, Lena's attitude also changes. Her body shifts, her head inclines toward the chamber entrance. She's listening.

CUT TO:

15 INT. FATHER'S CHAMBER 15

Father sits before the assembled children.

FATHER
But you've heard that one a
thousand times. Aren't you at all
tired of it?

The children PROTEST. "Nos" and "No ways."

FATHER
Very well.

Father is mustering the energy, when Samantha interjects.

SAMANTHA
You're the one who found him, right,
Father? Near St. Vincent's
Hospital...

Father smiles at Samantha's bright enthusiasm.

(CONTINUED)

FATHER

Not exactly, Samantha. He was found... and then brought to me. Wrapped like a present in some old rags, and at first no one wanted him because of the way he looked.

Now KIPPER interrupts.

KIPPER

"Throw him out," they said. "He's not our problem."

ZACH

"Leave him to the topsiders."

FATHER

Yes, Vincent was different, and people are terribly afraid of what they don't know. But soon, very soon afterward, the people -- many of them your parents and grandparents -- accepted Vincent and grew to love the very differences that at first made them so afraid.

SAMANTHA

You left out the part about his being sick.

FATHER

I'm sorry, Samantha. You're right. When he first came to us, he was tiny and very weak.

SAMANTHA

And he cried for three straight days.

FATHER

Yes, he cried for three days. And no one thought he would survive.

SAMANTHA

But you knew, didn't you, Father?
Father smiles at the memory.

FATHER

I felt a strength in him, a will. He wanted to live... and so he did.

16 PANNING THE CHILDREN'S FACES 16

as they listen rapt, to Father...

FATHER (O.S.)

But then there came a time of terrible
darkness to our world...

CUT TO:

17 OUTSIDE FATHER'S CHAMBER 17

where Lena hunkers, listening.

FATHER (O.S.)

A time we must never forget...

Mary bends down into FRAME.

MARY

Are you all right?

Lena looks up at Mary, who is standing over her, concerned, aware that Lena has been crying. Lena rises sheepishly, almost as though she's been caught. She reacts in part to Mary's matronly aspect ... supportive but firm.

LENA

I was just listening.

MARY

It's Father's time to be with the
children. And you should be in bed.
Come...

FOLLOW as they stroll in silence back toward Lena's chamber. Then:

MARY

(probing)

Are you worried about the
delivery?

Lena shrugs, speaking in a low tone.

LENA

I just want it to be over already.

MARY

(smiles)

That's what everyone says.

LENA

Yeah?

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

MARY
 (gently correcting her)
 Yes...

Lena reacts to Mary's gentle reproach like a child scolded,
 dutifully repeating...

LENA
 Yes.

And as they MOVE OUT OF FRAME, we:

CUT TO:

17A INT. LENA'S CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

17A

Mary drops Lena off in her chamber.

MARY
 Goodnight now.

LENA
 Goodnight.

Mary starts away.

LENA
 Mary?

Mary turns back, expectantly.

LENA
 Can I ask you something?

MARY
 Of course.

Lena hesitates. Then:

LENA
 I heard Father talking back there.
 About Vincent...

Her voice trails off, but her desire to know more is clear.

MARY
 (carefully)
 What did you hear?

LENA
 Not much.

Lena searches for the words.

(CONTINUED)

17A CONTINUED: (2)

17A

LENA

Just... that he's different from everybody... special.

MARY

Vincent is very special to us.

(beat)

In some ways, it's his fate... his life that holds us all together. He protects us... and we protect him.

LENA

Will I ever get to meet him?

Mary regards her warmly.

MARY

When the time is right. Sleep now.

And she exits, leaving Lena watching after her.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

18 VINCENT

18

kneeling, hooded, thoughtfully regarding his own reflection in the still, dark water of a small pond. There's the sound of rushing water nearby, and we are:

19 INT. CHAMBER OF THE FALLS (MATTE) - DAY

19

Vincent drops a pebble into the water, displacing his image among the ripples. But when the ripples subside, Vincent feels the presence of a stranger near him. He stiffens, bowing his head almost instinctively...

20 ANGLE TO INCLUDE LENA

20

behind Vincent, holding a ceramic water jug, the top of which is a cup. She steps back several feet, and we aren't sure exactly what she has seen.

LENA

You're Vincent...

VINCENT

(pause)

Yes...

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

Lena moves to the edge of the pond, still several feet from Vincent. He angles his face away, as she removes the cup and dips her jug into the water...

LENA
Mary said this is the best
water...

Lena fills her cup from the newly-filled jug.

LENA
(extending it to Vincent)
Want some?

VINCENT
No... thank you.

Lena shrugs and sips some water, wiping the residual moisture from her lips with her fingers. She places the jug on the ground and turns to face Vincent, who averts his gaze.

LENA
Why do you turn away from me? Do I
offend you?

VINCENT
(comforting)
No... You don't understand.

LENA
I've been hearing about you, but it's
like you don't even exist. You're
never around.

VINCENT
There are reasons...

LENA
What reasons?

But Vincent says nothing. Lena steps up close to Vincent, who stands now.

VINCENT
(strongly)
Lena, please...

LENA
I want to see you.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED: (2)

20

VINCENT

Lena...

But she steps even closer... and as she lifts her hands to Vincent's face, he stops her, grasping her wrists. She looks down at his hands, but what she sees and feels only gives her momentary pause...before she raises her arms to Vincent's still - shadowed face. And he can do nothing but allow her to remove the hood, which drops easily, freeing his golden hair...

VINCENT

(softly)
Don't be afraid...

LENA

I'm not afraid.

She regards him for the longest moment, truly unafraid and full of wonder. And Vincent is struck as much by her beauty as by her unquestioning acceptance of him. Their connection is almost palpable.

DISSOLVE TO:

21 INT. CHAMBER OF THE FALLS - LATER

21

Vincent and Lena are now seated, talking.

VINCENT

Don't punish yourself, Lena. I
know what it is to be alone.

Lena looks up at Vincent, greatly taken with his words.

LENA

I'm trying not to feel that way
anymore.

VINCENT

Good.

LENA

It's hard. It's all I'm used to.
(beat)
But I never would've dreamed there
was a place like this... or anyone
like you.

(CONTINUED)

VINCENT

Sometimes if you let your mind go... you can accept all sorts of things you never would have believed.

LENA

Yeah... I got real good at letting my mind go...

VINCENT

And where did it take you?

A pause

LENA

Promise you won't laugh?

VINCENT

I promise.

Lena regards Vincent for a beat, deciding at this moment to trust him completely.

LENA

The mountains...

(beat)

Every day I used to pass a travel agent -- and there was a poster I could see through the window. Steep green mountains... That's where I used to go.

VINCENT

"I live not in myself, but I become / Portion of that around me; and to me / High mountains are a feeling..."

LENA

What's that?

VINCENT

Part of a poem...

LENA

It's beautiful.

(CONTINUED)

VINCENT

... by a poet named Lord Byron. Your words... reminded me of his words.

(then)

His was a life of great pain... and paradox.

LENA

Paradox?

VINCENT

Contradictions. He was beautiful... but was partially deformed. He loved mankind... yet was unable to love man. And somewhere... deep within him, he carried a secret.

LENA

What secret?

VINCENT

No one knows. Something from his past. Something he was ashamed of...

Lena considers her own shame, tries to overcome it.

LENA

Don't you sometimes feel that your whole life could be different?

VINCENT

It can be.

Pause.

LENA

Vincent, have you ever been to the mountains?

No. . .

LENA

Me either.

Lena regards Vincent with growing compassion and admiration. Just then, she is seized by a sharp pain.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED: (3)

21

VINCENT
(standing)
Lena?

LENA
Oh God!

She recovers, clutching her belly. Vincent moves quickly to support her. As he swoops her up into his arms, we:

CUT TO:

22 INT. LENA'S CHAMBER - DAY

22

Tense. The air thickens... Time is longer. In a light smock, Lena lies on her white-sheeted bed, a blanket covering her bare legs. Mary stands beside her holding her hand. Father and Vincent watch from the other side of the bed. Behind them, on a metal stand, a trayful of medical supplies. Lena is siezed with a contraction, sweat springing to her forehead and upper lip. She twists away from the pain, but she doesn't cry out.

MARY
Remember, breathe in when you feel the muscles contract. Breathe out when they release.

Lena exhales.

MARY
That's good. Breathe with the contraction. You're very close now. It shouldn't be much longer.

Lena rolls her head to look at Vincent. She smiles at him.

VINCENT
Be brave.

LENA
I'm trying.

Father notices how Lena is treating Vincent, the natural connection between them...

DISSOLVE TO:

23 INT. LENA'S CHAMBER - HALF AN HOUR LATER

23

Lena's in the throes of another contraction. Her brows pinch together at the pain. But again, she doesn't make a sound. Finally, she exhales.

MARY

If it hurts, it's all right to cry out.

Lena nods once. She starts to bring her knees up under the cotton blanket.

FATHER

If you can, try not to raise your legs yet. Keep them straight.

Lena straightens her knees.

FATHER

It'll be easier for you that way.

Father grasps her wrist, checking her pulse against his watch.

FATHER

You're doing fine.

LENA

I'm thirsty.

Vincent ladles some water from an earthen pot. With one arm he props Lena up in bed and offers her the rim of the ladle. She takes it in both hands and drinks hungrily. After she finishes, he eases her back down.

LENA

Thank you.

Lena closes her eyes.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

24 INT. LENA'S CHAMBER - CLOSE ON LENA - LATER

24

Eyes still squeezed shut, exhausted, as if drugged. Mary is now sitting beside Lena, still holding her hand. Vincent and Father are also seated. Nobody speaks. All they can do is wait...

DISSOLVE TO:

25 INT. LENA'S CHAMBER - LATER

25

Supported by Mary, Lena now walks around the chamber. Mary guides her back and forth, pacing.

MARY
How do you feel?

LENA
Like I'm about to explode.

MARY
(smiling)
Is your back hurting you?

LENA
It's killing...

Mary turns to address Vincent.

MARY
Come here, Vincent. Make yourself
useful.

Vincent approaches the two women.

MARY
Okay, Vincent. Bend down a
little.

Vincent bends.

MARY
Now Lena, I want you to wrap your arms
around Vincent's neck.
(off Lena's hesitation)
Go ahead... it's all right.

Tentatively, Lena puts her arms around Vincent's neck.

MARY
(to Lena)
It'll help take the pressure off your
spine.
(then)
Now very slowly, Vincent, I want you
to lift her off the ground.

Vincent starts to straighten. As he does so, Lena lets out a sigh, a deep release.

MARY
(to Vincent)
Just a little...

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

25

Lena's feet are just inches off the ground.

MARY
How does that feel?

LENA
Better.

MARY
(to Vincent)
Okay, you can let her down.

Vincent does so. Lena unwraps her arms, a little shy. She looks away, and then her eyes lift back up to him.

DISSOLVE TO:

26 INT. LENA'S CHAMBER - LATER

26

Now we're into it. Lena legs are raised and apart, her arms hooked behind her knees. Mary has circled around in front of her, and now nods to Father, who moves closer, bringing the metal tray of medical supplies (including forceps and scissors). He has a white cloth draped over his shoulder. Vincent stands off to one side. Lena is sweating freely now, pushing, pushing... She wants to scream out, but the sounds are trapped way down in her throat somewhere.

MARY
Go ahead, child. Cry out if you want.
It helps.

And finally, Lena does, a sound that wells up from her soul, expanding in the room to encompass and symbolize all her pain -- so long left unexpressed.

MARY
Good... you're almost there... don't bear down yet, don't bear down. Short breaths... quick, breaths... That's right. That's good, Lena. Let the baby do the work. You're doing fine.

Lena continues to struggle and moan, her knuckles whitening from her clench. Vincent watches her labor.

27 ANGLE - MARY 27

as she responds to the sight of the baby's head. Father sees it too. Mary reaches in with her hands...

MARY

Okay, Lena. It's time now. Bear down.
Bear down, child.

28 RESUME SCENE 28

as Lena pushes with everything she's got... and the baby is born into Mary hands. Father reaches in with the scissors to cut the umbilical cord. The baby begins to cry as Mary ties the cord. She hands the child to Father, who puts the baby on his shoulder and dries it with the blanket.

29 LENA 29

watching it all happen.

30 FATHER 30

carries the baby to Lena, gently passing it to her.

31 31

FATHER

It's a girl...

LENA

(taking the child)

A girl...

FATHER

Yes. A daughter...

As Lena presses the baby to her breast. Father turns to regard Vincent, as he watches mother and child, peaceful and beaming in each other's arms.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

31 INT. LENA'S CHAMBER - DAY

31

A magnificent arrangement of flowers stands on the side table. Lena sits up in bed, cradling her infant daughter .. Cathy beside her...

LENA

I've almost forgotten how much it hurt. And let me tell you something: it hurts.

(re: infant)

But I look at her and I forget.

Both women begin dotting...

CATHY

She's just amazing...

LENA

Isn't she?

(with wonder)

I mean, yesterday, she wasn't even here. Now, suddenly, there's this new life...

CATHY

You have a lot to be proud of. You're very lucky...

LENA

I guess I was due for some good luck, huh?

CATHY

You deserve it, Lena. And no one can take it away from you.

LENA

I didn't think it was possible. So much has happened, so fast.

(then)

It feels incredible, Cathy... like I filled up a part of me I didn't even know was there. . .

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

Cathy is pleased by Lena's attitude ... then drawn to the infant girl by an endearing gurggle...

CATHY
(to baby)
Hello...

As Cathy plays with the baby, Lena regards her, as if debating with herself whether or not to broach something. Just then, the sound of Vincent's approaching voice draws their attention to the doorway...

VINCENT (O.S.)
Father, please...

As Father enters, followed by Vincent, in the throes of an argument...

VINCENT
Imogen?!

FATHER
What's wrong with Imogen?

VINCENT
For one thing, it's difficult to pronounce...

FATHER
It was good enough for Shakespeare.. .

VINCENT
If it's Shakespeare you're set on, then why not Juliet... or Maria.

CATHY
What's going on?

FATHER
We're discussing possible names for the child...

VINCENT
(to Lena and Catherine)
After every birth, we welcome the child into the community with a naming ceremony...

CATHY
Don't you think Lena, should have a say in it?

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED:

32

VINCENT

Like a mother...

CATHY

Also like a child. I don't think Lena ever had the chance to be a child.

VINCENT

She's found hope... I remember that moment when I saw it reawaken in you.

Cathy smiles and takes his hand. They pass by the CAMERA and turn an elbow in the tunnels, finding themselves suddenly, too quickly, at:

33 CATHY'S SUB-BASEMENT

33

The parting place. But they can't bring themselves to say goodbye. Cathy slowly turns to face Vincent, as he leans back against the tunnel wall.

CATHY

Our time together is always so short...

VINCENT

... or the time itself passes too quickly.

CATHY

Tell me something, Vincent... before I have to go.

VINCENT

What should I tell you?

CATHY

I don't know. Anything.

A moment passes as Vincent considers this. Then:

CATHY

Tell me how it felt to hold a baby in your arms...

The CAMERA MOVES IN SLOWLY TO VINCENT. VERY tight. And though, he doesn't speak, the answer ... the joy and the impossible regret ... is all there in his flashing eyes.

CUT TO:

34 INT. VINCENT'S CHAMBER - DAY

Vincent is reading...

LENA (O.S.)
Hello? Vincent?

Lena enters, high-spirited, carrying her daughter papoose - style. For the first time we see her slender but womanly figure.

VINCENT
Come in...

She approaches, holding forth a well-worn, leather bound book. . .

VINCENT
Lord Byron... You've already finished?

LENA
No, not yet. But I'm liking it. Especially the letters.

VINCENT
Then you should keep the book...

LENA
Really?

Vincent nods, his eyes smiling...

VINCENT
So you can always find the words for what you're feeling...

LENA
Thank you.

She tucks the book into her gown, then looks up at Vincent. A lingering, uncertain moment.

LENA
Vincent, when we met - do you remember we talked about being alone?

VINCENT
I remember...

LENA
Well I've been thinking... it doesn't have to be that way. Not anymore.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

34

She kneels beside him...

LENA

All these things keep coming back into my head... everything we've talked about... things I've never talked about with anyone. And I keep thinking when the baby came... how you were there, close to me... close to her.

Vincent is struck dumb with cognition, as Lena presses her palm to Vincent's chest.

LENA

Let me love you, Vincent...

VINCENT

Lena...

LENA

(tenderly)

I can feel your heart...

As he takes her hand with his own:

VINCENT

{softly, with
compassion}

Lena... I will always cherish the moment we first met. How you saw me... and accepted me.

LENA

You did the same for me.

VINCENT

I know... But what you ask now... is impossible.

LENA

Why?

VINCENT

Because... my heart is bound to another.

LENA

Cathy?

VINCENT

Yes ...

34 CONTINUED: (2)

34

LENA
Do you love her?

VINCENT
With all that I am. With all that I
could ever become.

LENA
But she's not here. Why isn't she
here?

VINCENT
She is where she needs to be. I
can't expect you to ...

LENA
(overriding)
If she's not here... she doesn't
love you.

VINCENT
Lena, you don't understand ... her
love... opened the world for me.

LENA
What do you think you've done for me?
I've never known anyone like you. But
Vincent... there's something missing
inside you. You have so much sadness.
And all I want to do is make you happy.
I want to give you everything...

But Vincent can only bow his head in silence. There is nothing
more he can say. Lena watches him, strangely undaunted, as if
waiting for some answer, as she gathers her baby close...

DISSOLVE TO:

35 INT. FATHER'S CHAMBER - DAY 35

Father's face reflects tremendous concern as Vincent stands
before him...

FATHER
Clearly, she's misplaced her
feelings... projected them onto
you.

(CONTINUED)

VINCENT

It's more than that, Father,
because there is a connection
between us... To deny that would be
unfair.

FATHER

Then you believe her love for you is
real?

VINCENT

It is what Lena believes.

FATHER

Perhaps Catherine could speak with her,
help her to understand...

VINCENT

(overriding)

No, Father. Not now, not yet. Lena
is still so fragile.

Father respects Vincent's wish to keep this problem from
Catherine.

FATHER

Then be careful, Vincent. Allow time
to come between you and Lena... and
hope that she gains some perspective
in the meantime.

Vincent considers Father's advice, realizes it's the only
possible course.

VINCENT

One either moves toward love or
away from it...

FATHER

And you must move away from it.

VINCENT

Leaving her alone, yet again.

Even as he says the words, the ramifications of this occur to
Vincent. He turns, pacing off his mounting frustration...

VINCENT

All her life, she has only known
rejection. And now, just when she's
come so far...

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED: (2)

35

FATHER
(emphatic)

You cannot encourage her, Vincent.

VINCENT
(beat)

I know...

Father senses the lingering heaviness in Vincent's demeanor...

FATHER

Lena will not be alone in this, I promise you. I'll have a word with Mary... and I'll be there for Lena myself.

Vincent regards Father with gratitude. But something more is going on behind his eyes...

VINCENT

Father. . .

Pause. This is difficult for Vincent... a confession that holds tremendous emotional power.

VINCENT

When Lena came to me... there was a moment. A pull, like a shiver beyond thought -- when I felt what it might be like to be someone else's possibility.

(then)

But it was just a moment...

Father understands the flicker of regret that passes over Vincent and is gone, as we:

CUT TO:

36 INT. LENA'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

36

Warm, yellow candleglow. Lena sits, gently rocking her baby to sleep, singing the last chorus of a beautiful lullaby. When she finishes, the baby stretches and lets out an impatient squeal.

LENA.

Shh... don't cry. Go to sleep. Don't you know, I never had a momma to sing to me.

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED:

36

She cups the baby's head in her hand.

LENA

But don't you worry. Nothing like that'll ever happen to you. You're not gonna be anything like me. You're gonna have a different life. You're gonna have a real family... and they'll never do nothing to you you don't want -- except teach you things you need to know... and take care of you when you need taking care of. And they're never gonna let you alone. So don't you worry.

The baby has quieted, and now Lena gently rocks her...

DISSOLVE TO:

37 INT. VINCENT'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

37

HAND HELD, shooting down at the sleeping Vincent. The chamber is very still. A faint source of light behind the CAMERA casts a moonlike wash over Vincent's peaceful profile. He stirs -- some sixth sense calling him away from unconsciousness. He turns heavily... and finally opens his eyes. What he sees comes slowly into focus.

37A REVERSE - HIS POV

37A

Lena, standing before the bed. The faint light comes through her simple sleeping smock, making the white cotton transparent, showing her womanly form beneath. She moves closer.

LENA
(softly)
Vincent...

37B NEW ANGLE

37B

Vincent sits up in bed.

LENA
I didn't mean to wake you.

Vincent watches her, as she sits on the bed besides him.

LENA
I couldn't sleep.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

37

Her proximity makes Vincent uncomfortable. He reaches for a beautiful quilted blanket beside him... and wraps it around her shoulders.

VINCENT

Please, cover yourself.

But Lena does not draw the blanket closer about her. Instead she reaches out for his hand.

VINCENT

Lena...

LENA

(taking his hand)

Don't be afraid.

Vincent hears the echo of his own words.

LENA

I want to stay with you tonight.

Vincent bows his head at the complexity of the moment. Lena is left looking at him, sensing the rejection.

Finally:

LENA

Vincent, please...

Vincent raises his head to regard her, his own eyes filled with pain.

LENA

For the first time, it means something to me. Don't send me away again...

But Vincent's look is unyielding. Lena fills with shame. In her face, her eyes, and her body... which she hunches slightly now as she draws the quilted blanket close, covering herself. She slowly stands and walks away, leaving Vincent with a heavy and hopeless heart...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

38 EXT. CATHY'S TERRACE - NIGHT - CU - VINCENT 38

staring out over the city, the night breeze blowing his hair over his troubled brow...

VINCENT

She's gone. She fled in the night.
Her child... she left her child
behind...

WIDEN

as Cathy, acutely aware of Vincent's pain, moves close to him.

VINCENT

Mary is watching over her now.

CATHY

You couldn't have done anything,
Vincent. Lena just wasn't ready.
It's my fault for not seeing that.

As Vincent turns to face Cathy:

VINCENT

No, Catherine.

Cathy picks up that there's something more...

VINCENT

It was I who didn't see... or
didn't want to see. At some
level.. I must have known it would
happen.

CATHY

That she would leave?

VINCENT

That she would fall in love with me...

(CONTINUED)

Vincent looks away, unable to meet Cathy's eyes. But she understands in this long moment what has happened, and suppresses any jealousy or anger she might be feeling in deference to the greater pain that is Vincent's.

VINCENT

She was so vulnerable... and frightened. Yet I saw part of myself in her. And I thought, somehow, if I could just reach out to her, she would accept my friendship.

CATHY

But that wasn't enough...

VINCENT

Her need was too great...

CATHY

To be loved...

VINCENT

Is it so wrong to desire love?

CATHY

No... Unless it creates unfair expectations... or confuses dependency with love.

VINCENT

I should have come to you sooner.

Silence as Vincent considers the painful truth of this.

CATHY

I'm sorry, Vincent. I'm sorry for what's happened.

She moves to embrace him. And Vincent accepts her embrace and all its nurturing support.

VINCENT

I fear for what is still happening...
 (as they
 separate, regarding one
 another)
 ... For Lena

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED: (2)

38

CATHY (assuring)
I know. I'll find her...

On Vincent's quiet nod of ascent, we:

CUT TO:

39 EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - NIGHT

39

Downtown, and the tide is out. What's washed up on the streets and corners are the bottom dwellers -- the urchins and mud-suckers of modern society. Banks of dirty snow line the curb and the rain-slicked streets. This is a Travis Bickle Christmas, and when Cathy's sedan eases into FRAME, it looks way out of place.

CUT TO:

40 INT. CAR - SAME TIME

40

Cruising slowly, leaning up against the wheel, Cathy scans the sidewalk.

41 HER POV - THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

41

Block after block slide past the window. Some are empty, burnt out. On others, hookers flash their wares, leaning in to look at her. Crack dealers whistle at her from under street lamps. Up ahead, she sees a whore in a Santa's hat, walking fast on tall, fishnet-stockinged legs. Cathy looks back at her as she passes... Cathy turns into another street and approaches three hookers on a street corner, posing and strutting. She slows and stops beside them, leaning over to roll down the window. LADY, a black hooker, saunters over and sticks her head into the car. Big, ironic grin.

LADY
Happy Christmas.

CATHY
I'm looking for a girl, about
twenty, dark skin. Her name is
Lena. You know her?

LADY
Hey, what she can do... I can do
better.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

41

CATHY

I'm sure you can. But it's her I want.

Lady holds Cathy's gaze for a scrutinizing beat.

LADY

What's her name again?

CATHY

Lena.

Lady twists out of the car.

LADY

Yo... anybody know a Lena?

No response. Lady puts her head back in the car.

LADY

No luck, lady. Whatcha want her for, anyway?

CATHY

She's in trouble.

LADY

Who isn't?

Lady keeps staring... aggressively. Something in Cathy's eyes makes her change her mind.

LADY

Try Maurice... at the Penthouse.

CUT TO:

42 EXT. 346 AVENUE C - NIGHT

42

Cathy's car pulls up to the curb on this blighted block of mostly abandoned buildings. A lone streetlight provides a puddle of pale yellow light as Cathy emerges from the car. Ignoring stares from the shadows, she walks into 346, an abject four-story affair that hasn't seen a rent-paying tenant in years.

41 INT. 346 AVENUE C - NIGHT

43

The same streetlight provides the only light in here, squeezing through broken and boarded-up windows. We FOLLOW as Cathy carefully climbs the stairwell... to:

44 THE TOP FLOOR LANDING 44
 It's even darker in here. The walls have been knocked down, some less completely than others, creating a kind of jagged maze. Cathy can hear her heart beating as she calls out...

CATHY
 Hello!

No answer.

45 CATHY'S POV - PANNING AND MOVING 45
 through this darkening nightmare.

46 RESUME CATHY 46
 who's starting to get the feeling that she's been had.

47
 CATHY
 (calling out)
 Maurice?

As she continues around a corner...

47 CATHY'S POV 47
 A powerful flashlight beam explodes right in her face, blinding her. ..

48 RESUME CATHY 48
 shielding her eyes.

CATHY
 Hey!

Her eyes begin to adjust now, and she makes out a silhouetted figure beyond the corona of the bright Light. The silhouette wears a baseball cap.

CATHY
 Are you Maurice?

MAURICE
 Some people call me Maurice.

CATHY
 Do you mind putting down the flashlight?

(CONTINUED)

MAURICE

Not if you don't mind putting down the purse.

After a moment, Cathy complies, setting down her purse at her feet.

MAURICE

That's right...

Maurice sets down the flashlight on an upright cinderblock, casting them both in half-shadow. Even in this light, Maurice doesn't look as though he's much older than sixteen or seventeen.

CATHY

I'm looking for a woman...

MAURICE

(overriding)

Lena, right?

(then)

Word travels fast on the street.
Faster than light. Street speed.

CATHY

Then you know where she is...

MAURICE

I'm an information broker.

CATHY

Does that mean yes?

MAURICE

It means I need my commission.

CATHY

How much?

But Maurice has already snaked her purse, and is now picking through it with speed. Cathy endures this as a necessary violation. But when Maurice comes out with the bills, he is sorely disappointed.

MAURICE

Twenty-five dollars? Man, I don't sell the time of day for this kind a chump change.

CATHY

Can I owe you?

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED: (2)

43

MAURICE

What you think, I'm running a
credit store?

Even in this half light, Maurice's eyes belie the slick rap. And there's something about Cathy he likes... After a long beat, he tosses Cathy's purse back at her feet, stuffing the twenty-five dollars into his pocket.

MAURICE

Don't think I'm gonna forget the
debt.

Maurice scoops up the flashlight, once again training it on Cathy. She shields her eyes...

MAURICE

One-ten Thirty-ninth street.
Apartment 202. Her old man Derek
set her up there, make him some
money...

The light snaps off suddenly, and Cathy keeps her hand up as she watches Maurice's slight figure receding into the shadows.

CATHY

Maurice... thank you.

MAURICE

(as he keeps walking)
Yeah...

Until he has disappeared, leaving us with only the residual echo of his shoes against the ground.

CUT TO:

49 INT. FURNISHED ROOM - NIGHT

49

A bed, a dressing table, a sink in the corner. Lena sits in front of the mirror, making up her face. Heavy blue eye shadow. Blood red on her full lips. She regards her reflection, gauging the effect with numb satisfaction... a different person.

Cathy enters the room. Lena continues applying her mask.

LENA

What do you want?

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED:

49

CATHY

I came to see how you were.

LENA

Nothing you say's gonna make me go back.

CATHY

You're your own person, Lena, I can't force you. But your baby's down there...

LENA

She belongs there.

CATHY

So do you.

LENA

I hate it there.

CATHY

You make it sound like a prison.

LENA

It doesn't matter. It's not a real place to me anymore.

CATHY

This is real?

LENA

This is what I know.

Cathy steps farther into the room.

LENA

(hard; too hurt)

This is what I do. I do anything. Anything you want, I'll do it.

CATHY

And you're okay with that now?

LENA

Damn right.

CATHY

It keeps you alive.

LENA

Keeps me alive.

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED: (2)

49

CATHY

A week ago you said it was killing you.

LENA

So? That was then. Things change.

CATHY

What things?

LENA

Things.

CATHY

Like your voice? You don't even sound the same.

Lena just glares at her.

CATHY

Don't you see what you're doing? Painting your face, putting on this costume. You're making yourself into someone else...

LENA

Don't gimme that.

CATHY

It's hurting me to see you like this. I can't..

(beat)

Remember what you told me that first night... about being outside. That cold feeling. Well, you can hide there if you want... but you've got a place to go now. With friends. People that care about you. It's your choice. If you want me to leave, just say so.

LENA

Leave.

Cathy accepts this, but it's hard...

CATHY.

She stops herself....

(CONTINUED)

CATHY

If you ever want to talk, I'm
there.

Cathy slowly backs away. She turns and puts her hand on the knob. From behind her, she hears a muffled sob. When she turns, she sees Lena, hunched and crying at the dressing table. Cathy moves to her and kneels, pressing an arm around her shoulder. After a moment:

CATHY

It's Vincent...

Lena looks up at her, nodding through the tears.

LENA

I love him.

CATHY

I know. So do I.

Cathy draws her close, comforting her. They sit there together a long time... before Cathy digs into her purse. She takes out a tissue and lifts Lena's face, wiping the wetness from her cheeks... and then the lipstick from her red mouth.

CUT TO:

50 INT. TUNNELS - NIGHT 50

Cathy leads Lena below... down a long tunnel. Up ahead, at the far end of the tunnel burns:

51 CATHY'S POV - A SINGLE TORCH 51

Like a candleflame in the distance.

52 RESUME SCENE 52

Cathy and Lena steer toward the solitary source of light. As they approach... they see it's Vincent, with a torch in one hand and Lena's child in the other.

Lena steps forward... stopping before Vincent, who offers her the child. Lena takes the baby in her arms, hugging her close, enveloping her with love. Then, she looks up at Vincent. A tight line joins their eyes.

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED:

52

LENA

Thank you.

VINCENT

Welcome home, Lena...

And now Cathy comes up to them. A moment with all three of them together. Cathy looking at Vincent. Vincent looking at Cathy. And Lena watching them. Finally:
The three of them turn... and continue the journey down, down...

DISSOLVE TO:

53 INT. FATHER'S CHAMBER - CU - THE INFANT

53

a wide-eyed, unfocused, miracle...

FATHER (O.S.)

It has been said that the child is
the meaning of this life...

WIDEN

to reveal the assembled community of tunnel denizens, including Vincent, Cathy, Mary and all the children, each holding a gift of some sort (a rattle, a doll). The chamber is illuminated by candleglow. Lena holds her baby in the center, beside Father...

FATHER

Today we celebrate the child... the
new life that has come into our
world. We welcome the child with
love... so that she is able to love.
We welcome the child with gifts, so
that she may learn generosity. And
we welcome the child with, a name...

(turning to Lena)

Upon which, I believe, Lena has
decided.

Lena, a little shy, looks up at Father .. and after a beat:

LENA

Catherine...

Now smiling fully, speaking louder, Lena regards Cathy...

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED: 53

LENA
Her name is Catherine.

54 ANGLE ON CATHY 54

her eyes brimming with joy at this honor...

55 ANOTHER ANGLE 55

Samantha growing restless, clutching a small box wrapped in shiny red paper...

SAMANTHA
Isn't it time for the presents?

FATHER
(smiles)
Yes, Samantha, it's time...

Everyone converges on Lena and her new baby, Catherine, bearing their gifts and their love. And as the children begin a choral arrangement with strains and echoes of the THEME...

56 ANGLE - VINCENT 56

extending his hand, which Cathy takes in hers. They regard one another with love and satisfaction at the happy ending of a story that might have ended otherwise. And as they start forward to join the others around Lena, we:

FADE OUT

THE END