

The Hayflick Limit

by
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SUPER: New Orleans, 1982

INT. NURSERY - MORNING

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (29), grins widely, blinking at something, or someone, just out of frame below her. She GIGGLES, bursting with joy.

IN HER LAP is her infant daughter, APRIL, fat and bright-eyed and cooing sloppily.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
*In 1912, renowned French doctor
Alexis Carrel cultured a sample of
embryonic chicken heart cells.*

Lorelei and her baby girl giggle and coo and make goo-goo eyes, basking in pure love.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
*The pampered cells were still alive
thirty four years later, far past
normal chicken lifespan. This was
considered proof that cells are
able to replicate indefinitely.*

She holds the baby to her chest, deeply, deeply in love.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
*Meaning, in theory, that unless
she's hit by a car or gets a dread
disease, a baby could potentially
live forever. In theory, we all
could. But we don't.*

Lorelei presses the baby against her chest.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
*Some of us barely get to live at
all.*

She holds that little girl as tightly as she can.

SUPER: SIX YEARS LATER

INT. DR. BAXTER'S OFFICE/LAB - DAY

Lorelei struggles to open a shipping box. She's THIRTY SIX now and *FRIGHTENINGLY THIN*. Her clothes hang on her like she's made of broomsticks and her cheekbones are deep hollows. She cuts her own hair. She's wearing a cheap blouse, a white lab coat and slacks.

The place has been ransacked. Glass has been broken, equipment thrown to the floor and chairs scattered about. Lorelei doesn't seem to care or notice.

She hacks at the box with a pocket knife, finally extracting from it...

A brand new ANSWERING MACHINE.

She SWEEPS a pile of broken glass off the counter, sets the machine down, examines it, unfolds the instructions.

QUICK CUTS AS DR. BAXTER PREPARES TO GO SOMEWHERE

IN HER KITCHEN, a knife makes quick, surgical cuts through a small radish, then a carrot, then a steamed chicken breast.

Each portion is set on a digital scale - 2.25 ounces.

ZIPP! 2.25 ounces of soy nuts are zipped into a plastic bag and dropped into a small cooler with other carefully measured doses of food. The cooler is SNAPPED shut.

IN THE BEDROOM, a suitcase SNAPPED opened. Clothes are placed inside.

IN THE LIVING ROOM, she does a set of crisp jumping jacks. DING! A timer goes off. She drops for some push-ups.

BACK IN THE OFFICE, Dr. Baxter stands with the cooler and suitcase. She's dressed to go, but as if a child had chosen her clothes, all mis-matched and oversized.

She looks down at the answering machine and hits "PLAY GREETING".

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)

(on machine)

*Hello. This is Dr. Lorelei Baxter.
For the next two days I can be
reached at the Tarpon Motel on
Grande Belle Island. 504-202-0107.*

She releases the button and watches the lights blink.

O.S. BUS BRAKES HISS.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNION PASSENGER TERMINAL, NEW ORLEANS - DAY

Dr. Baxter marches, suitcase and cooler in hand, down the long sidewalk that leads to the big doors of the art deco station.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)

Dr. Carrel's celebrated chicken cells became gospel to everyone, even the Nobel Committee. Everyone except an anatomist named Leonard Hayflick. Hayflick's cells kept dying.

INT. UNION PASSENGER TERMINAL, NEW ORLEANS - DAY

Dr. Baxter boards a Greyhound Bus with a few other passengers.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)

The assumption was that Hayflick's technique was somehow flawed. He had a different flaw. He surmised that Carrel's cells had been dying all along, replaced by graduate assistants terrified of having fucked up the famous culture.

Baxter watches the skyline grow smaller as the bus crosses the Mississippi River Bridge.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)

No one wanted to accept Hayflick's claim. But he was right. Chromosomes replicate imperfectly, like a Xerox of a Xerox of a Xerox, each slightly less legible the one before. This is why we get old, why we get sick, why we get cancer. Why we die.

DISSOLVE TO:

OUT OF THE BUS WINDOW - NIGHT

The suburbs pass the window of the bus, melting away into thick, dark trees and dense grass.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)

We each have an expiration date, an average of 122 years. Some might get a little more, some far less.

EXT. RURAL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Baxter exits the Greyhound bus, takes a seat on her luggage in the parking lot.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
*To exceed this limit would require
 finding a single random mutation -
 a truly immortal cell - somewhere
 in the 7.4 billion people currently
 inhabiting the planet.*

TITLE: **The Hayflick Limit**

EXT. DELACROIX HIGHWAY - DAY

Dr. Baxter gets off the bus. It HISSES away, leaving her by a tattered wooden sign - "*End of the World Marina*".

She walks past the husk of an old shrimper and disappears, swallowed by the reeds that line the long gravel road.

EXT. END OF THE WORLD MARINA, DELACROIX, LA - MORNING

Baxter sits on an overturned 5 gallon bait bucket, alone on a long wooden pier. Next to her is a trash can with "*End of the World*" stenciled on it.

She speaks into a small CASSETTE RECORDER.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 (into recorder)
 September 25th. Awaiting ferry to
 Grade Belle Island to find Nestor
 Dugas.

IN FRONT OF HER, salt marshes stretch to a sliver of open water, then to the Gulf of Mexico.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 (into recorder)
 Due to recent setbacks, success now
 depends entirely on his
 cooperation.

DISSOLVE TO:

FLASHBACK - **MONTHS AGO**

EXT. STRIP MALL - MORNING

People are dressed in summer clothes. The shopping center is run down and not fully occupied. A nondescript door says "DR. LORELEI BAXTER" in stick-on mailbox letters.

Dr. Baxter slips the key into the lock.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DR. BAXTER'S OFFICE/LAB - EVENING

The office is neat as a pin. There are a few shelves of books and some medical glassware, plus a large stack of yellow legal pads and little boxes of cassettes from the recorder, each carefully labeled.

Dr. Baxter is at the microscope. She peers in, squints, adjusts the lens, squints...squints again, racks the lens BACK and FORTH to focus.

ECU - cells on a slide, motionless in their solution.

BACK IN THE ROOM, her motions become quicker, more desperate as she moves the culture around looking at every part of it.

Then she raises her head... and SWEEPS the microscope off the desk. It CRASHES to the floor as she THROWS the petri dish, SMASHING it against the wall. She picks up a chair and SHATTERS the remaining glassware. Now we know who ransacked the office.

She takes a breath, then picks up the tape recorder, CLICKS it on.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Cell culture nineteen, Delaney,
ceased function at or near 4:47PM,
Friday, June 27th.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE - Baxter heads down the darkening street alone, briefcase in hand. Her dictation continues O.S.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (O.S.)
Cells were one hundred fifteen
years, eight months, four days old.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PARK - EVENING

Dr. Baxter sits alone on a bench, watching people play and laugh.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (O.S.)
 The Delaney culture cannot be replaced. The donor died three years ago, at age one hundred twelve.

LATER - Baxter walks through the park. She passes families at play, old women talking together on benches and old men laughing and playing chess.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (O.S.)
 Their expiration leaves no active cultures in the lab at this time.

She sits alone, watching people live.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (O.S.)
 Everyone continues to die.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Baxter approaches the library.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
Cases of advanced age are seldom recognized as medical news.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Dr. Baxter walks past the front desk, clearly familiar with the routine, and heads down stairs to the--

PERIODICALS ROOM

She pours over newspapers on the big table.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
They're typically in the "Human Interest" section and then only in small local papers.

She comes across an article - **"109 Year Old Man Still Fishing"**.

Suddenly very intent, she reads about NESTOR DUGAS, who is a hundred nine and still active, a fisherman in the rural community on Grande Belle Isle.

IN THE LIBRARY OFFICE - she copies the article.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
*To be of use, the donor must submit
 to an elective harvest of cells
 from the brain stem. The donor must
 be alive at the time of collection.
 If they've been dead for ten
 seconds, the cells are useless.*

CUT TO:

EXT. MEDICAL COMPLEX - AFTERNOON

DR. KENNETH HOFFMAN and his lovely family stroll toward the hospital, a portrait of upper-middle class success and normalcy.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
*The procedure is considered by the
 A.M.A. to be unnecessary and
 invasive.*

Dr. Baxter gazes at the perfect, happy Hoffman family. Is she jealous? Pissed?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Ken?

Dr. Hoffman stops. He and his family take in the skinny, disheveled Baxter.

DR. KEN HOFFMAN
 Lori.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Hi.
 (to the wife)
 Hi, Monica.

MONICA extends a hand, offers a sincere, pitying smile.

MONICA HOFFMAN
 Hey. It's nice to see you.
 (to the kids)
 You two say hello to Dr. Baxter.

The little boy, HUTCH, (7) speaks up.

HUTCH
You're skinny.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Yes, I am.

SAXON
You look like a worm.

HUTCH
Nuh-uh. Like a skelekin.

DR. KEN HOFFMAN
Okay. Enough.
(to Lorelei)
Sorry about that.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
It's not inaccurate.

HUTCH
What kind of Doctor are you?

DR. KEN HOFFMAN
Hutch? Enough.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
It's okay. I research chromosomal
replication obsolescence as it
applies to cellular longevity.

HUTCH
My Dadda Ken uses a saw to cut the
tops of people's heads off
sometimes.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Yes. Yes he does.
(to Ken)
May I speak with you, Dada Ken?

She pulls Ken away, then pulls out the copied article about
Nestor Dugas.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
This guy's a hundred nine. If I can
get twenty cells from the--

DR. KEN HOFFMAN
Lori...

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
He's on Grande Belle Island. I can
get him here this week.

DR. KEN HOFFMAN
Please stop.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Stop?! You want me to stop? Do you have some other ideas about how to keep our daughter from dying? What's your plan, huh? Or don't you give a shit about--

DR. KEN HOFFMAN
Enough! Jesus fucking Christ. Just stop it. Stop kidding yourself and stop lying to April. None of this is going to work. Not the starving not the petri dishes - none of it. And don't you dare, for one second, imply that I don't love my daughter.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
You're right. You're right, I'm sorry. I'm just-- Please. Ken? Do this for me.

DR. KEN HOFFMAN
How worried am I about you?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I'm fine. I just need you to stop being a pussy and get me the fucking cells.

DR. KEN HOFFMAN
Fuck you. Why don't get 'em yourself?

FLASHBACK - YEARS AGO

OPERATING ROOM - DAY

On a young Lorelei, around 22, standing very still next to an operating table. On it is an anesthetized patient half covered with a sheet.

INSTRUCTOR (O.S.)
Alright, Ms. Baxter. Let's go.

PULL OUT to see she is in an operating theater, with faculty looking down from a window and a team of nurses, instructors, and anesthesiologists all around. The INSTRUCTOR continues.

INSTRUCTOR
No sense thinking about it. Pick up
the scalpel.

One of the fellow students is a YOUNG KEN HOFFMAN.

KEN HOFFMAN
(whispering)
You got this.

Baxter nods to him, slowly raises the scalpel. It GLINTS in
the light.

INSTRUCTOR
Now, a nice technician has drawn a
red line across the patient's
abdomen over the spot where the
gall bladder should be. Do not
think, do not wonder nor worry nor
question nor flinch. Press the
scalpel against the skin and make
the incision. One. Two. Three.

Lorelei presses the scalpel against the skin, HANDS SHAKING.
Her breathing quickens. She takes a deep breath, focuses...

INSTRUCTOR
Ms. Baxter?

Lorelei takes a deep breath, but doesn't move.

INSTRUCTOR
Ms. Baxter, this person has
entrusted you with their life. Make
the incision now.

Lorelei nods Then she drops to the floor, her scalpel
RATTLING like a coin on the marble tiles. She's out cold.

END FLASHBACK

The stand-off is very tense.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
You're such an ass.

DR. KEN HOFFMAN
Tell April I'll be by Saturday
morning.

Ken turns and joins his wife, who gives Lorelei another
dreadful, pitying smile as Baxter watches them walk away.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
*Surgeons are the auto mechanics of
 medicine.*

Dr. Hoffman scoops up his step son and puts his arm around his wife as they head toward the hospital.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
*After the research, the
 experimentation, the testing and
 the diagnosis are done, the Meat
 Mechanic comes in, swaps out the
 parts, sends a bill, and goes home
 to dinner like everything's fine.*

Baxter watches as the obviously happy Hoffman kids hug Ken goodbye.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 (shouting after Hoffman)
 I'm bringing him here! I'm gonna
 call you!

Hoffman fires a glance over his shoulder, keeps walking.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
But everything is not fine.

CUT TO:

INT. CHILD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is lit only from the streetlight coming through the window. Dr. Baxter picks up a small jumper, some socks with ponies on them, some tiny underpants. She picks up a dropped plush toy, sets it next to a small sleeping form on the bed. Though we can't see her face, this is APRIL (6).

Dr. Baxter puts the clothes away, walks over to the bedside table. There are many bottles of MEDICINES and SUPPLEMENTS.

She strokes her daughter's hair.

APRIL
 Mommy.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Hi, sweetie. How are you?

APRIL

Good. Just tired. The new medicine made me feel weird, so Aunt Karen gave me some yogurt. It was gross, but I ate it.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

That was very brave of you.

APRIL

I know.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

So, sweetie, I have to go out of town.

APRIL

Okay. Are you going to be here for my birthday?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Of course. Of course I will. I'll be back tomorrow night. Auntie K's gonna stay over.

APRIL

Okay.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

I love you, Doodle, more than anything in the world.

APRIL

I love you, too.

Lorelei kisses her daughter's head, lingering a moment to smell her hair and to be close.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Goodnight, brave girl.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dr. Baxter's sister, KAREN LOUISE, reads on the sofa.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

There are leftovers in the fridge and her medicines are on the side table with a schedule. Thanks for staying.

KAREN LOUISE

I love being Auntie Karen. Can I
get her a puppy?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Don't you dare.

Lorelei picks up the bags.

KAREN LOUISE

Hey, it's none of my business
except that it is, but are you sure
you wanna leave and--?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Please don't.

KAREN LOUISE

You're not going to get it back.
Not one minute.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

The hell I'm not.

END FLASHBACKS

EXT. END OF THE WORLD MARINA, DELACROIX - MORNING

We are back with Dr. Baxter on the wharf. A SMALL FERRY makes
its way toward the dock.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SMALL FERRY, GULF OF MEXICO - DAY

Dr. Baxter sits on the rear seat as the little ship TOSSES
over the waves. She adjusts the life jacket, pulling the
straps as tight as they'll go, but it's no use - she's too
thin.

The ferry turns, rounding a small, uninhabited island, VIEUX
CHATEAU ISLE. On its western shore are the remains of FORT
BELLAIRE, a relic of the Civil War.

On top of the fort's stone wall, there appears to a WOMAN.
Baxter squints, curious. She takes the BINOCULARS off the
hook.

THROUGH BINOCULARS, the woman looks about seventy and appears
to be DANCING. She stomps out a clumsy jig, her long skirt
and hair blowing in the wind.

One foot looks big and misshapen and she pounds it very hard on the stones atop the wall. Her face is skyward and she is apparently SINGING.

Then the ferry turns and dips and Dr. Baxter loses sight of the woman. When she whips her head back around, the dancing old lady is gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRANDE BELLE ISLAND, MARINA - EVENING

Dr. Baxter stands with her bag and cooler on the wharf. She looks at a slip of paper in her hand - "Tarpon Motel. 3590 Highway 1".

She looks around - there are no signs.

ACROSS THE DOCK - a man RUNS as fast as he can straight toward her.

Dr. Baxter backs up, but there's nowhere to run on a wharf. The man stops, PANTING, right in front of her. She takes a step back.

The man, TRE LEBLANC, sports big sunglasses, bushy sideburns and a Kool Menthol sticking out of his mouth. He seems deranged.

LEBLANC
 (loud and slow...)
 I'm! Gonna take! Your stuff!
 (beat)
 Understand? Your stuff?

His Cajun accent is odd and musical and slightly off-putting.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Your...? You're robbing me?

LEBLANC
 What? Oh. HA!

LeBlanc breaks into a big, ridiculous grin.

LEBLANC
 No. I'm just offering to, you know, because you look-- Ha! Never you mind. I'm just giving you a 'lil hand.

He picks up her belongings.

LEBLANC

I'm a Island Guide see. Gonna show
you the sights, take you fishing.
I'm gonna give you the best deal.
And find you de bess food. Beaucoup
food. You gonna love Grande Belle!

LeBlanc stomps away with Baxter's things.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Wait! Is this Highway One?

LEBLANC

I surely hope so. Dere's only one
highway.

Baxter follows LeBlanc into the dark.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

It's a little motel. One story, plain and neat. Above it is a
sign - "The Tarpon Motel."

LEBLANC

You ever been shrimping?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Shrimping? Is that a thing people
do? Recreationally?

LEBLANC

(not really)

Oh, sure! Fun, fun, fun, yeah. The
wide open gulf, Miller's High
Life... All you gotta bring is the
greenbacks.

LeBlanc charges into the office with Baxter's things, leaving
her outside.

LEBLANC (O.S.)

Andre!!

CUT TO:

INT. TARPON MOTEL, LOBBY - EVENING

LeBlanc DINGS the bell on the desk. DING,DING,DING,DING! He
helps himself to a peppermint. DING-DING-DING!

LEBLANC

Andre!!

A man steps behind the desk, sporting the same Cajun features and coloring as LeBlanc. This is ANDRE.

ANDRE

Whatcha got, LeBlanc?

Baxter enters behind LeBlanc. Andre stares at her gaunt face.

LEBLANC

I found her on the dock.

(pause...)

Carried all her stuff here. The whole way. By myself. Heavy stuff...

Dr. Baxter gets LeBlanc's hint - he wants a tip.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

(reaching in her pocket)

Of course...

But Andre intervenes.

ANDRE

No. Please don't.

(off Baxter's look)

Please.

LeBlanc glares at her.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

He did carry my --

ANDRE

(interrupting, speaking right at LeBlanc)

Ahn-ahn! He don't need your money.

This is obviously about something more than this tip.

LEBLANC

Oh, come on...

ANDRE

(to Baxter)

Don't listen to him. He's a strange an' crafty son-of-a-gun. I mean, lookit him. He ain't right.

Baxter awkwardly folds the dollar back into her pocket. LeBlanc SIGHS, defeated.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I have a reservation. Dr. Lorelei
Baxter?

LEBLANC
A doctor? Ahhhh. All mah prices
just went up. I'm kidding. Mostly.

ANDRE
Ignore him. That's what I do. Okay,
jus' da one night? Why so short?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I have to get back for my
daughter's birthday.

ANDRE
Oh a lil' girl. What she's name?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
April. She's six.

ANDRE
Oh. Dat's nice, nice. I hope to
have me some chirren one day.

LEBLANC
You cain't raise no chirren on this
island.

ANDRE
You cain't. 'Cause you cain't find
nobody to raise no chirren wit you.

LEBLANC
Ain't nobody here deserve me.

ANDRE
Dat's a fac'.
(to Lorelei)
Alright. What brings you to our
lil' island, huh?

Andre extends a key, Dr. Baxter hands over a CREDIT CARD.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I'm here to visit Nestor Dugas.

Andre SNAPS the card into the old-school card machine, laying
the triplicate carbon paper slip over it.

ANDRE
Oh. You a relation?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
No. I just wanted to visit.

ANDRE
That's nice. You know where to go?

Baxter shakes her head.

ANDRE
The house is up-island, on the bay
side. The red one with the metal
roof.

ZIIIPPP! He drags the handle of the card machine, imprinting
the slips.

CUT TO:

INT. TARPON MOTEL, BAXTER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Baxter does her Jumping Jacks...

She has a tiny, 2.5 oz. portion of fruit from the cooler and
counts out a dozen almonds. This is dinner.

She lays a little army of supplements out on the counter and
begins swallowing them. There is probably more weight in the
supplements than the 'meal'. As she takes them, she
glances...

OUT THE WINDOW. Across the street and down a little is

EXT. THE MARLIN BAR - NIGHT

In the parking lot people mill around, drinking from plastic
cups, eating cheese fries and smoking. And LAUGHING.

BACK IN THE ROOM, Dr. Baxter washes down the last of the
supplements and pulls the curtains.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY 1 - MORNING

Evan a crappy little island full of poor fishermen and oil
field support services is still an island. The ocean still
shimmers in the rising sun and the gulls still float about
overhead.

Dr. Baxter, oblivious to all the beauty, hurries down the
road, headed for Nestor Dugas' house.

She strides past the derelict trailers, the fishing camps decorated with painted spare tires and old nets, the humble homes, and yards littered with the debris of hard work. She is on a mission.

CUT TO:

EXT. DUGAS RESIDENCE - MORNING

It is raised ten feet off the ground on wood pilings and painted a dull red. It looks like a giant insect. There are cars and trucks scattered around in front and under the house.

Baxter starts up the long, straight stairs.

AT THE DOORSTEP, she pauses a moment, then opens the screen door and raises her hand to knock. And on the front door -- a BLACK WREATH.

She peers in through the little square window in the middle of the wreath.

LOOKING INSIDE - family and neighbors sit around with cups of coffee and cinnamon rolls, all dressed in church clothes. Andre is there, sitting with some elderly women.

Beyond them is a simple casket, surrounded by fishing poles. On top is a framed picture of Nestor Dugas, the same picture from the newspaper.

Nestor Dugas is dead.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TARPON MOTEL, BAXTER'S ROOM - MORNING

Baxter sits on the bed staring into space in quiet, broken desperation.

CUT TO:

INT. TARPON MOTEL, LOBBY - MORNING

Baxter comes in, tosses her key on the counter. As she turns, Andre enters, still in his church clothes.

ANDRE

Hi there. Did you get to visit with
Mr. Du--

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 (very curt)
 Yes. Thank you.

She picks up her stuff and walks out.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY 1, GRANDE BELLE ISLAND - DAY

Baxter hurries down the road with her bags and her cooler. She stops and looks around. She seems suddenly lost, searching for clues as to how she got to be standing in the middle of a highway on an island in the Gulf of Mexico. She drops everything, presses her palms to her eyes.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 FUCK!!!! FUCK! FUCK!

She KICKS the bag, eyes welling with tears.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 FUUUUUUUCK!!!!!!

She drops to the ground and gives in to violent sobs of grief.

CUT TO:

EXT. FERRY - DAY

Dr. Baxter sits on the little wooden bench on the ship's deck, her eyes vacant. Gulls SQUAWK and dart around. Waves LAP around the posts.

The engines GROWL to life and the ferry pulls away from the wharf.

An elderly woman, MRS. MELANCON, ambles up, smiles, and sits right next to Lorelei.

MRS. MELANCON
 (thick Cajun accent)
 I'm gone see mah lil'est
 granddaughter all the way up to New
 Orleans. I got to be wit her at her
 weddin'. Weddin's is the most
 happiest things on dis Earth.
 (giggling)
 K'yaw, I thought that petit fille
 never would find nobody.
 (MORE)

MRS. MELANCON (CONT'D)
 Picky, that one, like her mama. But
 this young man she met, he's nice,
 nice.

Baxter looks away distractedly.

MRS. MELANCON
 You married?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 I was.

MRS. MELANCON
 Lef' him or los' him?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Sorry?

MRS. MELANCON
 You lef' him or you los' him?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Oh, uh, I don't know. There were
 circumstances.

MRS. MELANCON
 Always is. Me, I was married for
 seventy years.

She takes out a small Bible.

MRS. MELANCON
 I'm gonna show to you my wedding
 day picher. Oh, I'm gonna cry to
 look on it.

She opens the Bible, takes a photo from inside and shows it
 to Baxter.

CLOSE ON - a very old wedding photo. A young couple
 surrounded by family in front of a small church.

MRS. MELANCON
 I wasn't nothing but seventeen.
 Just made seventeen. And my Alvin -
 look at that man. He was my love
 from the day I seen him to the day
 he died, holding my hand. We only
 spent five days apart in all that
 time. Last month we would have made
 our 71st anniversary of marriage.

Baxter looks at the photo, smiles politely. Then her face
freezes.

OS - the sound of the FERRY ENGINES REVERSING as they arrive at the mainland dock.

CLOSE ON THE PHOTO - on one of the women in the crowd. It's the old woman Baxter saw dancing on the wall when she first arrived. And in the old photo, *she looks just as she did when she saw her*. She even has the big, misshapen foot.

BEHIND HER - the marina gets closer. BRAAHHHGN! The horn blows.

Baxter points to the image of the very young bride.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
That's you?

MRS. MELANCON
Who else it's gonna be?

Dr. Baxter takes the photo and examines it.

MRS. MELANCON
Gimme dat.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
This was seventy one years ago?
(pointing)
Who is that woman?

MRS. MELANCON
That's Old Tillie Breaux. Now gimme my pitcher.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
She's still alive.

MRS. MELANCON
I guess, but you know she ain't Old Tillie like she used to be. That Old Tillie in the pitcher was nice. The ol' witch out on that island now is coo-koo in the head, yeah.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
But wait. I saw her. I saw her yesterday and she looks just like this.

MRS. MELANCON
Well now, Old Tillie--

WHUMP. The ferry meets the wharf. The deckhand leaps onto the dock with the gangplank.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 (re the picture)
 Can I keep this?

MRS. MELANCON
 What? Hell, no! Gimme dat.

Baxter stares at the photo of Tillie Breaux - an old, old woman seventy one years ago, and seemingly no older now.

MRS. MELANCON
 Gimme my pitcher! I see what kinda circumstances you got. Dat poor man...

Mrs. Melancon SNATCHES the photo back, tucks it into her bible, and wobbles off down the gangplank.

Baxter stands, case and cooler in hand, facing the gangplank. IN THE PARKING LOT, Mrs. Melancon and her GRANDDAUGHTER HUG and KISS and LAUGH. Beyond them...

DOWN THE GRAVEL DRIVE - at the far end, the bus to New Orleans idles, waiting.

Seagulls sweep the sky overhead. The ferry pilot, PATIN, writes in a log, closes it, then shoves the gearbox into R.

PATIN
 (to Dr. Baxter)
 Miss?! You don't get off right nah', you going back to da island!

Off Dr. Baxter's look

CUT TO:

INT. TARPON MOTEL - DAY

The door swings open and Baxter enters. Andre and Leblanc are playing cards, a sandwich and a beer split between them.

ANDRE
 Sha. Didn't the ferry come? Oo, that idiot Boo Patin acts like dat's his own personal--

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 It came.

ANDRE
 Why you ain't on it?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
(to LeBlanc)
I'd like to do a little
sightseeing.

LeBlanc stands up. Andre cuts him a sharp look.

Dr. Baxter holds up her WALLET. LeBlanc's eyes widen.

ANDRE
I wouldn't. The old man lef' him a
lousy boat and he's lousy at
driving it.

The wallet is screaming at LeBlanc.

LEBLANC
I'm better'n you.

ANDRE
Uh-huh.
(to Dr. BAXter))
Look, dey gots beaucoup real
shrimpers over by the Marlin dat'll
take you out. Just try and find one
that ain't too drunk.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Thank you. Also, I need to make a
call.

ANDRE
Phone's broke.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Dammit.

LEBLANC
See? My boat's better'n your
motel.

ANDRE
Shut up, LeBlanc.

LEBLANC
You shut up, LeBlanc.

ANDRE
(to Dr Baxter)
I can send a Telex.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Fine. Could we do that now, please?

LeBlanc glances yet again at the wallet and stretches unconvincingly.

LEBLANC

Well, while ya'll transact, I'm gonna go roll up mah nets.

He yawns and ambles toward the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MARLIN BAR, GRANDE BELLE ISLAND - DAY

The parking lot contains a few trucks and Jeeps, a couple of motorcycles and a bunch of coolers. Dr. Baxter approaches, stepping gingerly through the gravel. Right before she gets to the door, LeBlanc steps out from behind a truck, putting himself between her and the door.

LEBLANC

Hey, Doc.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

(you're a liar)
Nets all rolled up?

LEBLANC

Oh, yeah. Roll up tight. So, what sites was it you wanna see?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

(pointing)
That little island over there.

LEBLANC

Vieux Chateau? Why you wanna go out there?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

I want to talk to someone.

LEBLANC

Ah. Tillie Breaux.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

How'd you know that?

LEBLANC

She's the onliest one that lives there. Why you wanna see Tillie?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Because she's the oldest person in
the world.

LEBLANC
Ah. Right...

He hesitates, thinking, but she reaches past for the handle
of the door.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Excuse me.

LeBlanc blocks her way.

LEBLANC
Hold on, hold on. I'll take you.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
But your brother said--

LEBLANC
Don't worry about Andre. Besides,
ain't nobody in there gonna take
you to Vieux Chateau.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
No? And why is that?

LEBLANC
Because... they afraid of witches.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Witches?

LEBLANC
(talking too fast, clearly
lying)
Sure. Look, fishermen, they
superstitious as all balls. You
can't say certain words on a boat,
can't bring a banana on a boat...
and dey all feared of witches. And
dey think anybody what goes to dat
witch's island gonna get, you know,
a spell cass' on 'em. And that's
gonna ruin all the fishing.

Again he picks up her stuff without asking.

LEBLANC
So, leave them be and lemme take
you myself.

(MORE)

LEBLANC (CONT'D)

In fac', don't say peep about
visiting Old Tillie to nobody.
Okay? I'll catch all the blame if
that spell gets cass'.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

You believe she's witch?

LEBLANC

Naw.

(snatching the money)

I'm a man of science, me.

EXT. GRANDE BELLE ISLE - DAY

As LeBlanc leads Baxter down the street, he takes out a LARGE
SNICKERS BAR and peels off the label. The starving Dr. Baxter
is mesmerized by it.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Is there a place we could get some
vegetables or a piece of fruit?
Some brown rice?

LEBLANC

Nope.

(offering the Snickers)

You want dis? I gots plenty.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

No. Thanks. I don't eat sugar.

LeBlanc shrugs, takes a bite.

LEBLANC

Well, maybe you oughta. I got
fishing line thicker than you.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

I practice Calorie restriction.
It's been shown to increase median
life span by 27 percent in monkeys
and by 40 percent in nematodes. I
take in 800 calories a day.

LEBLANC

Well, damned Sam. You skinny like
dat on purpose?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Yep.

LEBLANC

Ha. And I thought you had yourself
one of them dreaded diseases.

She picks up the pace.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)

*I do have a dread disease. So do
you. So does everyone.*

INT. TARPON MOTEL, OFFICE - DAY

Andre, at the Telex console, enters Baxter's note.

ANDRE

Dear Doodle
Stop

Andre looks disappointed at this. Maybe even pissed.

EXT. GULF OF MEXICO, LEBLANC'S BOAT - AFTERNOON

The boat is, in fact, pretty lousy. Baxter hunkers in the
tiny pilot house, life vest hanging loosely in place as the
boat LURCHES forward.

ANDRE (O.S.)

I love you more than anything and
I'll see you very soon
Stop

Dr. Baxter smiles and faces the island, filled with hope.

ANDRE (O.S.)

We'll have lots of time
Stop
Mom
Stop

CUT TO:

EXT. VIEUX CHATEAU ISLE - DAY

The boat nestles against a very decrepit pier, sending a
board SPLASHING into the water.

Baxter and LeBlanc pick their way carefully along what's left
of the pier. Baxter slips on a CRACKING board and nearly goes
in.

EXT. BEACH, VIEUX CHATEAU ISLE - DAY

The beach is brown and full of debris. The ruin of the old brick Fort Bellaire looms just beyond. They head toward it.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Do you know where she lives?

LEBLANC
Hell no.

They trudge around the fort until they come to where the southern wall has crumbled into the sea, its stones piled in the surf. They start to climb.

EXT. FORT BELLAIRE, TOP OF WALL - DAY

They have climbed the stone wall. Below them, the fort makes a giant "U" shape with a scrubby court in the middle facing the gulf. The crumbling ends of the walls continue to be nibbled away by the encroaching water.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
This is where I saw her, right up here. Dancing.

LEBLANC
Dancing? Huh. You gotta admit, that sounds like some kinda conjuring business, don't it? A lil' bit?

Baxter takes a step and SLIPS, nearly tumbling down the wall as the stones give way underfoot, rumbling and bouncing to the beach below.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
This whole thing's crumbling.

POV FROM SOMEWHERE BELOW - they are being observed from a hidden spot.

LeBlanc KICKS a stone off the edge. After a beat, it SPLASHES into the sea.

LEBLANC
Can't nobody stop time.

Dr. Baxter scans the island.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Okay, she has to live somewhere.

AGAIN, they are being watched from below.

LEBLANC
 (screaming)
 HEY, WITCHY-WITCHY?!!

Nothing. He shrugs. But...

IN THE CORNER OF THE FORT, Dr. Baxter catches a glimpse of someone limping into the shadows. The person vanishes into the far corner of the fort. Baxter freezes.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 (whispering)
 She's inside the fort.

They clamber as quietly as they can down to the shore and see, in the recesses of the fort walls...

A crude little SHELTER. Through an opening, they can just make out the old woman inside.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Okay. Okay, there she is. This...
 is it. You ready?

LEBLANC
 Well, I don't even know what we
 doin', but I'm ready.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Just follow me.

Baxter takes a deep breath and steps toward the little shack.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Excuse me! Excuse me, Mrs. Breaux?
 I'm Doctor--

WHAP! Baxter SLAPS herself on the neck.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 AHHH!

She flails backward, looks around, confused. Then...

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 (slapping her thigh)
 OW!

LEBLANC
 She cass'in a spell!

Now he SLAPS his hand to his arm.

LEBLANC

OW! Dammit!

He squints at the shelter - a GUN BARREL is sticking out of the door. FIPP! He's hit in the chest.

LEBLANC

AHHH! BB GUN!

FPPT! FPPT! She shoots them with BB after BB as they run around looking for cover.

LEBLANC

AHH!

With nowhere to hide, they dive onto the sand like infantrymen.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

(shouting)

Mrs. Breaux!

(no response)

I'm not here to hurt you!

(nothing)

I'd like to talk to you about having just a small sample of cells harvested from your brain stem!

LEBLANC

What?

Dr. Baxter stands.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Mrs. Breaux, please just--

WHIP! She takes a BB in the forehead.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

AGH!!

LeBlanc leaps up and runs. FIP! Right in the back of the head.

LEBLANC

Ow! Goddam it!

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Wait!

But LeBlanc is not waiting. Baxter looks at the old woman. FIP!! -- takes one right to the neck.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH, VIEUX CHATEAU ISLE - DAY

Dr. Baxter stumbles after the fleeing LeBlanc, but she's slow and halting, stumbling fifty yards behind him.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Wait! You can't leave!

LEBLANC
The hell I can't!

IN THE DISTANCE is a shrimp boat. On its deck, two fishermen stare at LeBlanc. No waving, no response.

LEBLANC
What you looking at, assholes?!

As he climbs onto the BOAT, Baxter arrives at the end of the RICKETY PIER, grabbing her head and SWOONING. It looks like she's about to fall over.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
We have to try again. I need her.

LEBLANC
Sorry, Doc. I charge double for getting shot collec'n witch brains.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Fine. Double it is.

LEBLANC
(stopping)
Show me the cash.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I don't have any more cash. But I have a credit card.

LEBLANC
No can do, boo. Cash only.

He casts off the boat's rope, starts the engine, ready to leave her.

Off Baxter's look

EXT. LEBLANC'S BOAT - EVENING

Dr. Baxter has a tissue pressed against a BB wound as LeBlanc peels a Band Aid and sticks it over the tiny abrasion. As he does, Dr. Baxter sighs and braces herself, getting woozy from hunger.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Fuck it. I give up.

LEBLANC
I don't blame you. I mean, she did
shoot us.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
No, not that. The Snickers bar. Can
I please have one?

He considers this, then extends a King Size Snickers bar. As
she reaches for it, he pulls it out of reach.

LEBLANC
I dunno. You ain't gonna blame when
you die like everybody else?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I will not.

He extends it again. She reaches and he yanks it back again.

LEBLANC
I feel like you might be eatin'
your disappointment about Tillie,
you know, burying your feelings in--

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
(interrupting)
Gimme that goddam Snickers bar!

LEBLANC
(grinning)
Yes, ma'm! Okay.

He hands it to her. She takes it, reflexively reads the
nutrition label.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Holy shit. I can live off this for
days.

She RIPS the rest of the wrapper with her teeth and PEELS it
like she's undressing a lover. She STARES at the wavy
chocolate coating, SNIFFS it, then takes a tiny bite. A sound
of intense pleasure SQUEAKS out of her.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Oh, God.

She closes her eyes, chewing deliberately and with great
intensity.

LEBLANC

You look like you might need a little 'alone time' with that thing.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Yeah. Calorie Restriction...
 (chew chew)
 ...heightens your sense of taste.
 And smell...
 (chew, chew)
 ...the way blind people's hearing becomes more acute.

Baxter quietly MOANS with pleasure, CHEWING SLOWLY, drifting off into the flavor.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Wow. I can already feel the sugar in my blood. This must be what cocaine feels like.
 (sitting up straight)
 I feel good.

LEBLANC

See there? Maybe now you think a lil' more clearer and leave that old lady alone.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

On the contrary.

She wipes a little chocolate from her mouth and lets go a tiny smile.

EXT. GRANDE BELLE ISLE, WHARF - DAY

Baxter and LeBlanc climb off the boat, covered with Band Aids.

ACROSS THE WHARF, fishermen stare them down.

LEBLANC

Hey dere, fellas!

Dr. Baxter looks worried, but LeBlanc struts right past the surly fishermen, ignoring their glares.

LEBLANC (O.S.)

Andre!

CUT TO:

INT. TARPON MOTEL - EVENING

Baxter and Leblanc approach the counter. Andre takes in the Band Aids. He, too, looks pissed.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Hi. Turns out, I actually need a room for tonight. And, uh...
(extending her credit card)
A one hundred sixty dollar cash advance. Please.

ANDRE
No.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
No? The Mastercard sticker is on the door. You are obligated to--

ANDRE
Oh, obligated. Yeah. Obligated, like being where I say I'm gonna be...
(at Leblanc)
And doing what I say I'm gonna do.

Why is Andre so pissed? Finally, he takes the card.

ANDRE
Well, you right about the sticker on the door. And, as a selec' merchant, The Bank Of America...
(rummaging in a drawer)
Has *obligated* me to confiscate any card...

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
What are you doing?!

ANDRE
...that I feel may be being used...

He produces SCISSORS retrieved from the drawer.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Stop!!

ANDRE
...for suspicious activities.

LEBLANC
AH!

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

NO!

SNIP! He cuts the card in half, throws it in the trash.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

What the hell is wrong with you?!!

ANDRE

What the hell is wrong with you?

Andre takes AN ENVELOPE from the mail sorter behind the counter, throws it in front of Dr. Baxter.

ANDRE

Go home.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY 1 - NIGHT

Dr. Baxter steps into the puddle of street light and opens the envelope. Inside is a Telex.

ON HER FACE as we hear the Telex read.

KAREN LOUISE (O.S.)

Lorelei
Stop
Telexes?
Stop
What the fuck?
Stop
April back in hospital
Stop

She looks away, unable to continue.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Fuck.

After a beat, she pulls it together and looks back at the paper.

KAREN LOUISE (O.S.)

Asking about you
Stop
Come home now
Stop

Lorelei sits at the base of the light post, drops her head onto her knees, just trying to hold it together.

ACROSS THE WAY, LeBlanc heads away from the motel like a scolded dog. He stops when he sees Lorelei in the lonely spot of light.

LEBLANC
You alright, Doc?

She doesn't respond, doesn't look up. After a moment, LeBlanc steps off into the night. But then, Lorelei's head raises.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Mr. LeBlanc? I imagine this work will make me quite rich. How about you take me back in the morning and I owe you a million dollars for your trouble?

LEBLANC
Sorry, Doc. I don't ask tomorrow to give me what I need today.
(whispering)
You figure out how to get some cash, we'll talk.

As LeBlanc walks away, *Lorelei has an idea*. She hates the idea. Hates it. But...

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
LeBlanc?

LeBlanc turns around.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Is there a Doctor on the island?

CUT TO:

INT. LEBLANC'S BOAT - NIGHT

LeBlanc's boat bumps gently against the wharf as Dr. Baxter, with suitcase and cooler, climbs into the tiny cabin.

LEBLANC (O.S.)
Don't mess it up, alright? I got my Feng Shui jus' right.

Dr. Baxter looks around the jumbled wreck of fishing gear and general chaos.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Yes, I can see that.

She sticks her head back out.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Thank you, Mr. LeBlanc.

LEBLANC
See you bright and early.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
(calling out)
Mr. LeBlanc? What's your first
name?

LEBLANC
Tre.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Anybody ever call you that?

LEBLANC
Nope.

INSIDE, she looks in her little cooler - it's empty.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
*Leonard Hayflick theorized that our
telemers, the strands at the end
of our chromosomes, are
incrementally shortened each time
they replicate until they're too
short to function.*

She takes out her supplements and hungrily gobbles them down.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
*I suspect that, in an immortal
cell, there would be a protein that
inhibits this process or restores
the telemers.*

Then she settles into the little make-shift bed in the boat's
cabin and lays perfectly still, eyes wide open.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
*If this protein were to be found
and harvested, it could be
introduced into cells that are
degenerating because of age or...
any other reasons.*

She pulls out a locket on a chain around her neck and
clutches it to her chest.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
*And those cells would be repaired
 and protected and the subject would
 continue to live.*

She kisses the locket.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 (whispering)
 I love you sweetheart.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARLIN BAR, GRANDE BELLE ISLAND - NIGHT

LeBlanc is in the parking lot of the bar, hesitating. After a moment, he takes a breath and opens the front door.

INT. MARLIN BAR, GRANDE BELLE ISLAND - NIGHT

The bar is filled with fishermen. They all eye LeBlanc warily as he walks in.

LeBlanc approaches a table of hard faces and begins talking. They don't seem interested at first. But soon one of them nods. Then one shrugs and a few others nod. Some sort of agreement is being reached.

LeBlanc smiles, heads toward another table of fishermen, who also seem to dislike him, and begins to talk to them.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY 1 - PRE-DAWN

Pink light washes the island and the sea as the sound of crickets briefly mixes with the sound of gulls.

Baxter and LeBlanc walk together down the gravel shoulder of Highway 1.

LEBLANC
 I got it all lined up like you
 said.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Good. And I think you were right
 about Mrs. Breaux. I think I
 startled her. I can be...
 startling, I guess.

LEBLANC

Naw. Think so?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

I just need to earn her trust. To, you know -- seduce her.

LEBLANC

Gross.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

You know what I mean.

LEBLANC

Lord, I hope not. And remember don't tell none of these coonasses about visiting with that witch.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

You always talk about them like you're not one of them.

LEBLANC

I ain't. I mean, I am, but I ain't. They don't like some things about me and verse visa. They don't wanna see nothin', don't wanna know nothin', don't wanna believe nothin' dey don't already know. Me? I don't agree.

LeBlanc absently bends over and picks up a BRICK.

LEBLANC

Island people...
(cocking back the brick)
Is crazy.

He sails the brick. CRASHHH!! It smashes through the GLASS DOOR of a small, wood framed building.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Jesus Christ!

Baxter ducks, looks around. Somewhere a DOG BARKS.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

What the hell are you doing?!

LEBLANC

Sh! LeBlanc gots a 'lil surprise for you.

LeBlanc reaches in through the glass pane he just smashed, UNLOCKS the door and SWINGS it open.

CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED RETAIL SPACE - MORNING

Baxter peeks in through the doorway.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
(whispering)
LeBlanc?

LEBLANC
Lookit.

He swings a FLASHLIGHT around, revealing a dusty exam table, an old exam light, a single chair.

LEBLANC
This was old Doc Mouton's office before he died. They got everything you need up in here.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I don't need anything.

He pulls out an old black leather bag, SLAMS it on the exam table, starts BLOWING dust off of equipment and dropping things into the medical bag.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I said I don't need anything. The deal was, we said - I said - exams only. No procedures. I don't need equipment.

LeBlanc continues to fill the medical bag.

LEBLANC
Sure. I know. Exams only. I got it. But no offense, but...
(surgical scissors...)
You know, strange lady, don't look too healthy, Band Aids all over...
(stethoscope...)
You need to, you know, make yourself a good impression. Professional and all dat.
(otoscope...)
So you can get the money. And give it...

The last item he takes out is a GLISTENING SCALPEL.

LEBLANC

To me.

He WAVES it around like a scabbard in the light.

LEBLANC

Check it out.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

I... I, uh, certainly... Please put that away. I don't need it.

LEBLANC

You never know, Doc.

He loads gloves, very old-looking bottles of chemicals...

LEBLANC

You just never know...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TRAILER HOME, FRONT DOOR - DAY

They have arrived at a humble, well-kept trailer home. Baxter is terribly, terribly uncomfortable.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

We need to be on the water before noon.

(beat)

And remember, just check--

LEBLANC

(interrupting)

Just check-ups. Got it, got it, got it.

BAM! BAM! LeBlanc pounds on the door.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)

Studies show that, if you are sick and go see your doctor, you will typically recover in seven days.

The door opens. A YOUNG WOMAN looks out, COUGHS in Baxter's face.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAILER HOME - DAY

An entire family COUGHS all over her. She pulls her collar over her mouth and nose and approaches the young woman like she's got Tuberculosis.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
*And if you don't go see your
 doctor, you will typically recover
 in seven days.*

She awkwardly takes pulses and looks in throats, all the while keeping as far away as possible.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
No one wants to wait seven days.

The Young Woman hands Dr. Baxter twenty-five bucks.

OUTSIDE THE TRAILER, Dr. Baxter hands the twenty-five bucks to LeBlanc.

CUT TO:

AT A REPAIR SHOP - LeBlanc KNOCKS on the window.

INSIDE, Baxter buries the stethoscope in a FAT MAN's chest hair.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
People need the reassurance.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAISED CAMP - DAY

An old, WEATHERED MAN shoves his TOENAILS in Baxter's face. They are thick as planks and a sickly YELLOW.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 That's a fungus.

WEATHERED MAN
 Fungus? Huh. You can gimme a
 subscription for that?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 No.

Dr. Baxter blinks at him uncomfortably.

WEATHERED MAN

Well, long as it ain't gonna kill
me.

The man SLAPS her on the back.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)

*What people want to hear from a
doctor is that they aren't going to
die.*

He hands Dr. Baxter SOME MONEY.

EXT. HIGHWAY 1 - DAY

Baxter and LeBlanc trudge down the side of the highway.
LeBlanc puts his hand out - Baxter lays the cash in it.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)

*No one is afraid of a cold or an
infection or even a tumor so long
as someone tells them that it isn't
going to kill them.*

EXT. HIGHWAY 1, LANDRY RESIDENCE - MORNING

An impossibly tall run of wooden stairs leads up to a mobile
home suspended twenty feet in the air on a series of tall
creosote poles. The windows are covered with foil.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)

*Then they can go back to ignoring
the fact that something else is.*

LeBlanc bounds up the stairs. Dr. Baxter follows, hauling the
black bag up the ridiculous stairs.

LeBlanc KNOCKS.

CUT TO:

INT. LANDRY RESIDENCE - DAY

It's very dark. KNOCK-KNOCK!

The door opens slowly and LeBlanc's face appears in the slot
of light.

LEBLANC

Hell-o!

FROM OUTSIDE, a middle-aged woman, MRS. LANDRY, is peering back out at him.

MRS. LANDRY
(whispering)
You brung her?

MR. LANDRY (LEONCE) hollers from somewhere inside.

MR. LANDRY (O.S.)
Not LeBlanc! Just the doctor!

MRS. LANDRY
Hush, Leonce with that talk.
(to LeBlanc)
Please come in.

CUT TO:

INT. LANDRY RESIDENCE - DAY

Baxter takes in the scene. It's hushed and dark as a cave. One lamp is on. Water DRIPS somewhere.

In a chair sits LEONCE LANDRY, a wiry dark-skinned Cajun. He is next to the sofa, which contains the silhouette of his enormously pregnant seventeen year-old daughter, MICHELLE. Leonce holds her hand. She's miserable. They all seem to be miserable. Mr. Landry stares daggers at LeBlanc.

DRIP, DRIP... Baxter is frozen in place, so LeBlanc provides her with a gentle, unwelcome push forward.

LEBLANC
(whispering)
This is Doctor Baxter, one of the top medical folks in all of New Orleans.

Baxter shoots him a look.

MR. LANDRY
So you said.
(to Baxter)
And what you doing way out here? A top medical doctor and all dat?

LEBLANC
(quickly)
I told you - she's a do-gooder. That's all. Just big time do-gooder coming, you know, to do... some good.

Mr. Landry looks at Dr. Baxter.

LEONCE LANDRY
She look half like death her own
self.

MRS. LANDRY
Sh! Leonce.
(to LeBlanc)
I'm thankful to you for bringing
her.

Leonce stares suspiciously at Baxter.

MRS. LANDRY
We's all real worried about her,
Doctor.

The girl MOANS.

MRS. LANDRY
(whispering)
She's bleeding a lil' bit and says
she hurts. And she's big, big.

Baxter walks haltingly toward the swollen girl.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I'm, uh, Dr. Baxter. What's your
name?

MICHELLE LANDRY
Ahhhhhhhh...

MRS. LANDRY
She's name Michelle.

Baxter looks the girl over in a very formal way.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
It's nice to meet you. Michelle.
(beat)
So, you're pregnant.
(beat)
I am going to have to touch you. Is
that okay?

MICHELLE
AGHHH!

Dr. Baxter approaches the girl like she's defusing a bomb. She just sort of TOUCHES the big belly. POKES it a couple of times, GRIPS it like a basketball, gives it a few awkward SQUEEZES.

LeBlanc appears behind her, holding out the stethoscope.

LEBLANC
(whispering)
You never know...

Dr. Baxter glares at him, but she takes the stethoscope, hangs it around her neck, and pulls Michelle's skirt low to expose the huge, bare belly - *it looks just like the one from medical school*. Dr. Baxter stare at it, completely frozen.

LEBLANC
Doctor? (pause) Doc?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Uh, yep. Okay.

She takes a breath and places the stethoscope on the belly. She listens, makes a face, listens again... then SIGHS and stands, relieved.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Okay. Everything seems fine.

MR. LANDRY
Fine?! What the hell you mean fine?
(to LeBlanc)
That's some doctor you brung us,
LeBlanc.

MRS. LANDRY
Leonce. Hush.

MR. LANDRY
I ain't paying no twenty-five
dollahs fo' dat!

LeBlanc quickly intervenes.

LEBLANC
Hey, Doc? You sure you don't, uh,
wanna give her the old, you know...
the Cub Scout Salute?

LeBlanc holds his index and middle fingers up, pressed together. It is indeed the Cub Scout Salute. Until he lowers his arm, making it the international sign for pelvic exam.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Nope. Not, um, not necessary. At
all. Her symptoms are perfectly in
line with carrying twins.

Mrs. Landry's hands are over her mouth - thrilled.

MRS. LANDRY

Twins!

Michelle bursts into SOBS.

MICHELLE

(begging)

But I don't want twins.

FAMILY

Shhh/You be grateful/That's why you
got two tits/Hush now/It's true.

Baxter glares at LeBlanc and heads for the door. LeBlanc puts his hand out to collect the payment from the happy/angry/weeping family.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE - Baxter stomps away. LeBlanc follows.

LEBLANC

This sure is working out great,
huh?

Dr. Baxter spins to face him.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

CUB SCOUT SALUTE?!

LEBLANC

Oh, come on.
(holding up the cash)
You want some old lady brains or
no?

She stomps off toward the wharf.

EXT. HIGHWAY 1 - AFTERNOON

Stomping down the highway, Baxter stops, looking at something.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Wait a second.

She takes in the grounds of the church - the one from Mrs. Melancon's photo.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

They must keep records of births
and deaths in there. Right? I could
verify Mrs. Breaux's exact age.

LEBLANC

I doubt it. Coonasses don't write
shit down. Besides, ya cain't go
in. The priest is only here one
time a month.

But Dr. Baxter is staring at a small adjacent cemetery with a
low wall.

She steps THROUGH THE LITTLE GATE, starts reading all the
head stones.

She stops and lingers at one for a girl who died at thirteen,
April's age.

Then she spies a bunch of headstones marked "BREAUX". And
among them, ONE EMPTY, OVERGROWN PLOT. Dr. Baxter steals some
flowers from a nearby grave and heads out.

CUT TO:

EXT. GULF OF MEXICO - EVENING

Baxter, huddled in the little pilot house with LeBlanc, looks
out at the approaching island and the fort.

LeBlanc drives the boat with his feet, leaning back, enjoying
the ride.

LEBLANC

Man, I ain't gonna miss this place.
I'm Gonna go to New Orleans, me.
You from New Orleans?

Baxter seems not to be listening, but LeBlanc keeps talking.

LEBLANC

Maybe open restaurant, you know? Or
start a construction company, join
a band, open a casino - whatever.
That's the place for me, "the
Crescent City."

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

What about your brother?

LEBLANC

Andre? He uh...
(suddenly emotional)
He don't wanna to go with me.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
(realizing...)
Andre's not your brother.

LEBLANC
That's why he don't want me to make
no money - he don't want me to
leave.

He steers toward the island, pushing the accelerator forward.

LEBLANC
But when he sees my badass life in
New Orleans, he'll change his mind
quick.

Dr. Baxter SMILES, for what seems like the first time.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIEUX CHATEAU ISLAND - DAY

Baxter and LeBlanc, hidden behind the edge of the fort, peer
at the little shack.

Almost hidden by vegetation, it looks like it was made from
an abandoned camper. Or maybe an old boat. Dark and bleak,
things seem to be growing on it.

An odd, dim light FLICKERS inside.

LEBLANC
Damned Sam. That some Unibomber-
booby-trap-shit right there.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Come on.

LEBLANC
(tugging on her sleeve)
Around the side. Out of the BB
zone.

Baxter creeps toward the shack, flowers in hand. LeBlanc
follows reluctantly. When Baxter gets there, she pauses at
the door to straighten her blouse. LeBlanc smiles.

LEBLANC
Oh, she's gonna be so seduced she
gonna give to you her brain and her
heart, too.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Shut up.

Baxter KNOCKS. Waits... nothing.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

(shouting)

Hello? Mrs. Breaux?

Still nothing.

LEBLANC

Mos' likely she's dead.

(off Baxter's look)

What? I'm just saying,
statistically...

Baxter POUNDS on the door. Still no response. She goes to push it open, but LeBlanc stops her.

LEBLANC

Prolly gots the booby traps.

She pushes it anyway. The door CREAKS open.

INT. TILLIE'S SHACK - DAY

It's like they've stepped inside of an animal. Dark and humid and musty.

Dappled light flickers across a shadow forest of HUNDREDS OF SMOOTH STICKS, suspended from the ceiling and gently dancing in the breeze from the open door, TAPPING together. As we focus, we realize they are DRIFTWOOD CRUCIFIXES, dozens and dozens of them of all sizes. They hang from the ceiling, are stuck to the walls and lay on the floor.

LEBLANC

And... goodbye.

He turns to go, she grabs him by the shirt, nods toward...

ACROSS THE TINY ROOM, sitting in a SHAFT OF LIGHT, in a small chair at a wooden counter by the window, sits TILLIE BREAUX, motionless in front of a SINGLE BURNING CANDLE. We mostly see her back. She looks about seventy five, with simple clothes and straight, silver hair. She was pretty, but now seems vacant and weathered. And dirty. And kind of terrifying.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Mrs. Breaux?

No acknowledgement.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Mrs. Breaux?

Still nothing. Dr. Baxter steps closer, dodging the hanging crucifixes.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
(loudly)
MRS. BREAUX?
(beat)
MRS. BREAUX, CAN YOU HEAR ME?

Nothing.

LEBLANC
(whispering)
Maybe she's deaf.

Baxter waves a hand in front of her - still nothing.

LEBLANC
(whispering)
And blind. Wait, she shot us. Not
blind.

On the counter, the CURTAINS blow lazily. Their dance seems to have all of Mrs. Breaux's attention.

Baxter realizes the curtain is blowing over the flame, *about to catch fire*.

She leans past Mrs. Breaux and moves the candle a few inches away from the curtain.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I'd like to talk to you. I'm Doctor
Lorelei Baxter.

Without looking up, Tillie moves the candle back in place, right in the little ring it left in the dust. Baxter looks at LeBlanc - LeBlanc SHRUGS.

Baxter moves the candle back out from under the billowing curtain, a little further this time.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
THE CURTAIN?

Tillie's eyes drift slowly toward Lorelei's. Baxter GASPS GENTLY - somebody's in there.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
MRS. BREAUX? CAN YOU HEAR ME?

Tillie looks at her, expressionless, and moves the candle back again.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 (like she's talking to a
 child)
 No, no. This could catch fire.
 Fire?

Baxter leans in and blows out the candle.

Tillie's head SNAPS up, her eyes narrow.

TILLIE BREAUX
Vautour. Vous êtes un vautour.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 You can speak.

Tillie stands.

TILLIE BREAUX
*Je vous détruirai avant que je vous
 laisse me toucher.*

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 French. Shit.

WHIP! LeBlanc grabs Baxter by the arm, pulls her backward.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Hey!

Tillie is holding A LARGE CARVING KNIFE. She SWINGS it, slashes the blooms off the flowers in Lorelei's hand.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Ah!

LEBLANC
 (to Tillie)
*Pardonnez-nous. Nous étions partir
 juste.*

LeBlanc NODS and SMILES at Mrs. Breaux as he pulls Dr. Baxter away.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 (to LeBlanc)
 You speak French?!

Tillie moves intently toward them with the knife.

LEBLANC

LeBlanc? What you think I'm Irish?

WHAP - Baxter's head smacks a crucifix.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Ow! Let go of me. What did she say?!

LeBlanc shoves Baxter toward the door.

LEBLANC

(to Tillie)

Au revoir. Merci beaucoup, Madame.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Let me go!

LEBLANC

(as they struggle)

Look, she's talking some country-ass French, but I think say she gonna kill you.

Baxter STOPS, turns and faces Mrs. Breaux, peering through the crucifix forest. She plants her feet.

LEBLANC

You ain't heard me?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

(whispering to LeBlanc)

Translate.

LEBLANC

You out your mind...

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

(softly, to Tillie)

Mrs. Breaux? You are... extremely special. You know that, right?

LEBLANC

Mme Breaux? Vous êtes ... extrêmement spécial. Tu sais que c'est vrai?

Tillie stops.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

You contain a miracle. A miracle I need very, very badly. Will you please, please help me?

LEBLANC
 (translating)
*Vous contenez un miracle. Un
 miracle dont j'ai vraiment besoin.
 Voulez-vous s'il vous plaît, aidez-
 moi s'il vous plaît?*

She raises the knife, steps toward Baxter, who steels herself and holds her ground.

Tillie is now very close, raising the knife.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Mrs. Breaux, I will give you
 whatever you want. I'll give you
 anything. I will do anything.
 (choking up)
 I'm begging you.
 (to LeBlanc)
 Tell her!

LEBLANC
Mme Breaux, je donnerai--

TILLIE BREAU
 (interrupting)
 You cain't gimme what I want.

LeBlanc and Baxter glance at each other - she speaks English.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Try me.

She raises the knife to Baxter's throat. LeBlanc moves to shove her away, but Baxter throws a hand out to stop him.

TILLIE BREAU
 I wants only one t'ing in dis
 worl'.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Anything.

TILLIE BREAU
 To leave it.

A look of awful recognition washes over Dr. Baxter.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 (realizing...)
 The curtains. You're trying to kill
 yourself.

TILLIE BREAU

No. Dat's da way to hell. No, I
gots to die natural or by a
accident. Or a sickness. Or murder.
Now - you can give me that?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

You--? You want me to kill you?

TILLIE BREAU

If you come back up in mah house?
Either you gonna kill me, or I'm
gonna kill you. I ain't got a
damned thing to lose.

She pushes the knife a little harder against Dr. Baxter's
throat.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Wouldn't committing murder keep you
out of heaven?

TILLIE BREAU

I'll have plenty time to make my
amends.

LeBlanc gently pulls Dr. Baxter away from the knife point and
toward the door.

LEBLANC

Au revoir, madame. So sorry to
bother you.

EXT. GULF OF MEXICO - EVENING

The pair ride in tense silence.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRANDE BELLE ISLAND, WHARF - EVENING

LeBlanc leaps from the deck, lashes the rope to the cleat and
walks off.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

What time tomorrow?

LEBLANC

What?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

You heard me. We have a deal.

LEBLANC
So you gonna kill that old woman?

Dr. Baxter follows him across the pier.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Of course not.

LEBLANC
So you gonna lie to her.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Yes! Hell, yes!

LEBLANC
Nuh-uh. She already done shot us
both and 'bout stabbed you. What's
next? Hand grenades? I'm out.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I thought you wanted out of here?

LeBlanc walks away.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOUSE - MORNING

Four year-old DEUCE is rocking back and forth on the sofa, squeezing his head and HUMMING. Dr. Baxter stands in front of him with the ancient OTOSCOPE from the stolen bag. Next to Deuce is his mom, JACKIE.

JACKIE
Honey, let her look in your ears.

Deuce shoves his fingers in his ear.

DEUCE
Nnnnnn... NO!

JACKIE
Deuce.
(nothing)
DEUCE!

DEUCE
Nnnnnnnn...nah-nah-nah!

Baxter stands there, no idea what to do.

JACKIE
He's just old enough to know what's
coming, you know?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
(thinking of April)
Yes. That's a tough age.

DEUCE
NANANANA!!

JACKIE
DEUCE, GIT YOUR DAMNED FINGERS
OUTTA YOUR DAMNED EARS!

Dr. Baxter has an idea, holds a finger up to quiet Jackie.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
(mouthing silently to
Deuce)
Deuce, I have an idea.

Deuce stops bouncing for a second, looks up, pulls his
fingers out of his ears to try and hear.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I said I have an idea.

She extends the otoscope to him.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Stick this magic wand in my ear and
see if you can see my brain. It
looks like a walnut. But smaller.

Deuce takes the otoscope, crawls up onto the table and sticks
it in Dr. Baxter's ear.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Push the button.

He does. The light comes on. Deuce GASPS with delight.

DEUCE
It'sh dawk. I don't shee any
brains. It's just hairy and dares
lotsh of ear boogers.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
What? Ear boogers? No way. I just
cleaned my whole skull!

DEUCE
Der ish earboogers. Lotsh of 'em.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Oh, yeah? I'll bet you have more.

DEUCE
Nuh-uh. Not more dan dat.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Way more.

She playfully takes the otoscope, puts it in the boy's ear...
WHISTLES.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
You have... approximately one
bajillion ear boogers.

DEUCE
Nu-uh!

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Oh, yeah? Mr. LeBlanc?

LeBlanc, quietly amazed at seeing Dr. Baxter in Parent Mode,
steps over and peers into the scope.

LEBLANC
(whistles)
Lemme see now. One, two, three...
one bajillion!

He holds up Deuce's hands like a prizefighter.

LEBLANC
We got a winner! Mos' Ear Boogers!

DEUCE
The winner!

Baxter smiles, quite pleased, and begins packing the bag.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
(to Jackie)
There's fluid build-up. He needs
tubes. You should take him to his
pediatrician for a referral to an
EENT. No danger, but soon.

Deuce grabs his ears and MOANS.

JACKIE
Dat's all the way up in Houma.
Dat's half a tank a' gas and it
won't be 'til Thursday at the
soonest.

LEBLANC

Sorry, the Doc here is only doing exams. No procedures.

DEUCE

(grabbing his head)

UNGGGHHNN!

Jackie DUMPS her purse on the table, starts rummaging around for change to pay for the visit. Dr. Baxter and LeBlanc share a look. Then

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Do you have some vinegar?

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER, Jackie holds Deuce's head in her lap as Baxter squirts a syringe-full of vinegar into his ear.

DEUCE

OW!! OW!! She's killing me!

Dr. Baxter pulls on his ear, letting the vinegar drop in. Deuce stops screaming, opens his mouth and closes it several times, popping his jaw.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Better?

Deuce NODS.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

He still needs to go in, but this should help for a couple of days.

JACKIE

Thank you, Doctor. Thank you so much. It's just so hard to see 'em hurting, you know?

Baxter nods. She does know. Jackie starts collecting the bills and coins to pay.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

I think this one's on the house. Don't you agree, Mr. LeBlanc?

LEBLANC

I do, indeed.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Baxter and LeBlanc walk off.

LEBLANC
That was good.

Baxter allows herself a very slight smile.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
That was good. Thank you, Tre.

Off LeBlanc's grin

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FONTENOT'S CAMPER - DAY

Baxter and LeBlanc head toward a camper with a truck and a clothesline and several broken motorcycles in front of it. She has a little extra pep in her step.

LEBLANC
Maybe we should get you some body armor. I got some cammo. We could get Kevlar...

They arrive at the door.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Let's make this one quick.

LEBLANC
Oh, yeah. Fontenot just got a pimple or something. Easy as a peezy.

He KNOCKS on the door.

LEBLANC
(shouting)
Fontenot!

Nothing. He KNOCKS again. Waits.

LEBLANC
(calling through the door)
Fontenot?! Got the only and the one Doctor Baxter here, man!

The door swings open.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Hi. I'm -- AH!

The crook of a huge arm is shoved in her face. It belongs to FONTENOT (Cecil), a very large, olive-skinned man. He looks like a manatee that stood up. And he is not well. Sweating, panting, exhausted. Drunk?

FONTENOT

IS IT SPIDERS?!

In the crook of his elbow is a giant, swollen knot, blue-black, with redness radiating up and down the arm.

Baxter recoils, almost tumbling down the stairs.

INT. FONTENOT'S CAMPER - DAY

Fontenot staggers to the counter like a drunken bear, takes a gulp of Jim Beam from a pint bottle, SLAMS his fist on the table.

FONTENOT

Well?! Is it spiders?! My sister says I got spider eggs in there.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Uh, it looks like an infection in your lymph node.

Fontenot looks at LeBlanc - what?

LEBLANC

She says no spiders.

FONTENOT

NO SPIDERS?!

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

No. No spiders.

Fontenot drops heavily into a chair.

FONTENOT

Uhhhhh... oh, mais, no.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Your lymphatic system takes the toxins and bacteria --

WHACACK! - Fontenot kicks a chair over. He SHIVERS, the arm twitches. He MOANS.

LEBLANC

How bad is... whatever that is?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Pretty bad. The infection is radiating toward his heart. It can be life threatening

He POUNDS his big manatee head on the table. WHAM! WHAM!

FONTENOT

AHHHHH!!!

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

(backing up)

And it can be very painful. It needs to be lanced. A small incision to drain the pus out.

FONTENOT

NO SPIDERS GONNA COME OUT?!

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

No. No spid--

CHIK! LeBlanc fires up his Zippo, holds the scalpel blade in the flame.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

What are you doing?

LEBLANC

She says she's gonna pop that sucker.

Fontenot SLAMS his arm, boil up, onto the table. With his other hand, he takes another gulp of whiskey.

LEBLANC

This is for the lance.

Dr. Baxter looks at the swollen skin...

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

No.

LeBlanc holds the heated scalpel out for her to take.

LEBLANC

Come on, man - you say dat shit is "life threatening". You gotta help him out.

Dr. Baxter looks at the blade, at the swollen boil, at the face of the desperate, terrifying Fontenot.

LEBLANC

Come on. You gotta do dis.

She looks at the red, swollen arm and...

Turns and walks toward the door.

FONTENOT

UNNGGGG!!!

With his massive good arm, he grabs LeBlanc and pulls him close.

LEBLANC

AH!

FONTENOT

You said she'd help me, you lying son of a bitch faggot!

LEBLANC

OW! Cecil! Dat's my neck!

CUT TO:

EXT. FONTENOT'S CAMPER - DAY

Baxter exits with eerie calm, closing the door of the camper behind her as she steps away.

LEBLANC (O.S.)

Hold still. Ow! Fucking hold still!

FONTENOT (O.S.)

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, YOU--
AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!

LEBLANC (O.S.)

AHHHH! Whoa, shit!! SHIT! What the fuck?!! (coughing) Oh, man that's nasty!

FONTENOT (O.S.)

AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!

Baxter starts walking faster, then breaks into a RUN, fleeing the sounds of SCREAMING and the BANGING of furniture.

She runs as hard as she can, vanishing down the long highway.

CUT TO:

EXT. WHARF - AFTERNOON

Baxter stands in a yoga pose, waiting as LeBlanc storms down the wharf. He has blood on his shirt and his face and he's pissed.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Ready to go?

LEBLANC
READY TO GO?!! That bastard knocked me on my ass when I popped that thing! He almost broke my jaw! Blood and stuff everywhere, stinking like hell!

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I said no procedures. Can we go now?

LEBLANC
I can ax you somethin'?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Yes.

LEBLANC
WHO THE FUCK YOU THINK YOU ARE? Why won't you help somebody, huh? Is dat poor son of bitch not old enough for Ms. Fancy Ass Doctor to care about? Huh? You not gonna get rich off saving some poor coonass life, so to hell with him, huh? Just leave him to hurt and to die?!!

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I told you no procedures. Okay? I can't do it.

LEBLANC
You "cain't". You "cain't" do it? You give me one reason - ONE - why you cain't help these people or you can swim to that fucking island. One reason why you--!!

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Because I'm not a doctor!

A long beat as LeBlanc stares at her.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Not an MD, anyway. I have a PhD in Cellular Biology. A doctorate. So, technically, I'm a Doctor... of Philosophy.

LEBLANC
Philosophy?! Shit. Shit! Man, these coonasses gonna fucking kill me.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I couldn't do it. The cutting. It's too--

He turns and walks away.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
It's too immediate. Too invasive. It's barbaric! You can kill people introducing micro-organisms and if you make one slip, they bleed to death.

He keeps walking.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
You have to take me! Please! I gave you a reason!

Stay on Lorelei's desperate face. O.S. - SLAM!!

CUT TO:

INT. LEBLANC'S BOAT - EVENING

SLAM! The little cabinets are THROWN open and SLAMMED shut. Lorelei is looking for something. SLAM! She tosses maps, tools, dry-rotted life vests, porn magazines, she lifts cushions, sweeps her hand under a storage locker. She finds a half bottle of whiskey, takes a slug as she continues to search. Then she finds what she's after - the spare keys.

CUT TO:

INT. TARPON MOTEL, ANDRE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Andre stands in his robe, having just opened the door. It's LeBlanc. He tries to shut the door, but LeBlanc shoves his hand in the doorway and holds the door open.

Andre stares at him, then turns and goes to his dresser, taking something from a drawer. He returns and hands LeBlanc a wad of money.

ANDRE

Leave. That's what you want, right?
To leave me? So... leave.

LeBlanc looks at the money, looks at Andre. Andre lets the robe DROP from his shoulders and stands in front of him NAKED.

ANDRE

This is me, LeBlanc. Wit my crooked teeth and my skinny little legs, my belly and my beat-up lil' motel. It might not look like much, but it's all yours.

(holding back tears)

Because I truly do love you. But you a dumb little dog. You spend all your time trying to dig out the gate when you already got everything right at home. Well, I'll let you out, but I'm closing the gate behind you. And you gonna miss out on a good life right here while you out lookin' for it somewhere else.

Andre puts the money in LeBlanc's shirt pocket, kisses him, slips into bed and turns off the lamp.

ANDRE (O.S.)

You gotta accept what you got,
LeBlanc, while you got it.

O.S. - the boat engine ROARS to life.

EXT. LEBLANC'S BOAT, DECK - NIGHT

The accelerator is SLAPPED forward. The engine GROWLS, the boat SMACKS against the pier.

INSIDE, Lorelei is TOSSED forward.

LORELEI BAXTER

AH!! Shit.

She squints at the controls, unable to move the throttle. Finally she sees the button on the side, shoves it onto REVERSE, and pushes again.

OUTSIDE, the boat heaves around in reverse, struggling against the moorings. It's still tied up. A rope STRAINS, pulling at a cleat. CRAACK!! Wood SPLINTERS as the cleat FLIES into the air, finally jerked free by the rope.

The boat LURCHES backward into the dark water. LIGHTNING FLASHES in the clouds, followed by THUNDER.

Lorelei shoves the control into FORWARD and the boat HEAVES forward and to the left, narrowly missing the pier as it arcs away into the darkness.

CUT TO:

EXT. GULF OF MEXICO - NIGHT

The boat LURCHES and PITCHES over the water, going too slow and then too fast, cutting parallel to the waves - doing everything wrong. But, in front of her is a tiny flickering light on Vieux Chateaux Island.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIEUX CHATEAU ISLE - NIGHT

WHAMM!! The boat SMACKS into the shallows and GRINDS into the sand, beaching very roughly before listing to one side. Backwash sprays all over the deck. Lorelei shuts off the motor, flops into the surf, and wades to shore.

UP THE BEACH... she staggers through the RAIN.

AROUND THE FORT, she heads toward...

TILLIE'S SHACK, twinkling in the darkness.

A huge thunderstorm rumbles now, the rain picking up, as Baxter steps toward the shack.

BLAM! Lightning strikes near the cottage sending Baxter ducking away. When she looks up, she sees--

Tillie, DANCING around in the sand in the center of the fort. She has an old METAL RAKE held overhead. She is the tallest thing around. She is trying to get struck by lightning.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

NO!

Baxter charges toward her, wiping rain from her eyes.

As thunder CRASHES around her, Tillie holds the rake high above her head, SPINNING slowly around and SINGING above the din.

TILLIE BREAU

(scream/singing)

*Jolie blonde, regardez donc quoi
t'as fait, Tu m'as quitte pour t'en
aller*

She continues spinning as the LIGHTNING gets closer and closer, EXPLODING into the ground only a few feet away.

TILLIE BREAU

(scream/singing)

*Pour T'en aller avec un autre, oui,
que moi...*

She sees Baxter, raises the rake high into the air.

TILLIE BREAU

HE TOOK EVERYBODY UP TO HEAVEN!
MADE 'EM ALL INTO BUTTERFLIES AND
DIRT!

KABOOOM!! A bolt of lightning STRIKES inches from Tillie and sends mud and water FLYING around her feet.

TILLIE BREAU

WHY HE DON'T WANT ME? WHY HE DON'T
LOVE ME?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

DON'T DO THIS!

Tillie raises the rake high.

TILLIE BREAU

LORD, TAKE ME TO HEAVEN! TAKE ME
WITH YOUR LIGHTNING!!!

She holds to rake as high above her as she can, stretching to the sky.

TILLIE BREAU

PLEASE, GOD! PLEASE!

Baxter runs at her with all she has. Just as a bolt STRIKES the rake, Baxter HITS in full stride, KNOCKING Tillie to the ground. They SLIDE across the wet earth as the LIGHTNING hits the ground in a DEAFENING EXPLOSION. They SPLASH to a stop, all tangled up together in the mud.

Tillie scrambles for the rake, Baxter KICKS it away, ROLLS over, PINS Tillie to the ground like a wrestler.

Tillie struggles against her, but Baxter holds her down. Rain fills Tillie's mouth as she SCREAMS.

TILLIE BREAUX
HE SENT HIS LIGHTNING FOR ME! TURN
ME A'LOOSE AND LET HIM HAVE ME!

She twists with all her might. Slipping loose in the mud, she scrambles for the rake. Baxter grabs her ankle, holding on as tightly as she can.

TILLIE BREAUX
TURN ME LOOSE!!

Tillie KICKS and POP! - her foot comes off in Lorelei's hands. She looks at it - it's wooden.

Tillie, using her one good foot and her stump, clammers after the rake. Lorelei gets to her feet and leaps, tackling the old woman.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I'LL DO IT!

Tillie continues to flail.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I'LL DO IT! I'LL KILL YOU. Help
me... and I'll kill you.

At last, Tillie stops fighting. They lock eyes through the pouring rain. Baxter lets go of her, sits up straight.

She stands, tries to help Tillie up. Tillie shoves her away, grabs her wooden foot and slips it back into place. She sloshes around in the mud until she can right herself, then picks up the rake, examines the lightning-burned end of it, and tosses it toward Baxter as she sloshes away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FORT BELLAIRE - NIGHT

In a big, crumbling archway of the old fort, Lorelei sits in the sand, looking through the rain at the dark water throwing itself stubbornly against the sand.

She takes a large waterproof bag from her backpack, removes her notebook and pen.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (O.S.)
 (as she writes)
 Tillie Breaux has graciously agreed
 to donate cells.

PAN ACROSS the craggy, moonlit stones of the fort.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (O.S.)
 She is approximately one hundred
 fifty five years old.

TILT UP TO THE CLEARING SKY, the moon hanging low over the water.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (O.S.)
 Out of the countless billions of
 organisms, her cells possess the
 cure for the disease known as
 death. The mechanism - the amino
 acid or genetic marker or protein -
 will be called Aprillium.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FORT BELLAIRE - MORNING

The sun rises pink over the calm water of the gulf. Gulls CRY. Waves wash gently on the sand.

Lorelei is stretched out on the stones of the crumbling fort, her too-thin body all bones and angles. Her clothes are draped on the rocks around her to dry.

SHUP! A wet hunk of grey something hits the sand. SHUP! Another one. They are slices of squid.

Baxter sits up, realizes Tillie is there. With the BB gun. Gulls gather, SQUAWKING and pecking at the bait.

Tillie tilts the gun, SHAKES it. A BB falls into the slot. She SNAPS it closed. Dozens of gulls now SQUAWK and dive at the squid. She PUMPS the gun, sights it...

The birds seem to slow down, their swooping dance nearly frozen, shadows at play against the sunrise. *It is the most beautiful thing Lorelei Baxter has ever seen.*

PFFFT! - a lone seagull DROPS to the sand, FLOPS around in agony. Tillie walks past the stunned Lorelei and snatches up the bird. She kisses it on the head and, with one quick TWIST, breaks its neck.

As she walks away, Lorelei begins furiously gathering her clothes.

CUT TO:

EXT. WHARF - MORNING

LeBlanc stares at the wharf where his boat should be. A plank is damaged where the cleat was torn off.

Off of his look of anger

CUT TO:

EXT. TILLIE'S SHACK - DAY

Lorelei finds the door open a crack - an invitation.

INT. TILLIE'S SHACK - DAY

Lorelei slips in and finds Tillie peering into a pot of water boiling on the old wood stove. She sings under her breath as she stirs.

TILLIE BREAU

(singing softly)

*Clotilde, Clotilde, ma belle petit
fille... e vais te couvrir de
bisous...*

(translation)

*Clotilde, Clotilde, my beautiful
baby girl. I'll cover you with
kisses...*

Neither woman speaks as Lorelei enters. To Lorelei the room now looks less like a witch's hovel and more like a shrine, beautifully lit and filled with song.

TILLIE BREAU

(singing softly)

*Quand je te rencontre dans les
étoiles*

(MORE)

TILLIE BREAU (CONT'D)
 (translation)
 When I meet you in the stars.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 That's pretty.

No response.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Who is Clotilde?

TILLIE BREAU
 She was name after me and she
 looked just like me, you know. Like
 we was twins.

She turns around, gestures to the crucifixes.

TILLIE BREAU
 When I had my one hundred birthday,
 I made a hundred crosses for to
 show the Lord dat I remember him.
 And every year since, when it first
 gets cool, I make him a new one so
 one day he might would notice and
 recall me to mind and take me up to
 see my 'lil Clotilde.

She sweeps her hands through he crucifixes, setting them all
 CLANKING against each other in a raucous percussion.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Your daughter?

TILLIE BREAU
 My grandbebe. My youngest and my
 most favorite. I know'd her from
 the inside, you see. We was like
 one. We's still like one.

LORELEI BAXTER
 I'm sorry.

TILLIE BREAU
 The rest all become strangers. I
 can't even remember some of my own
 grandchirren. And wit' the great
 grandchirren, I got to where I
 couldn't know 'em. I wasn't nobody
 to dem.

She turns back to the stove.

TILLIE BREAUX

They all lef' me. One way or the other. But Clotilde... she stayed wit me.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

You loved her very much.

TILLIE BREAUX

Hoooo! You don't even know.

Lorelei smiles - she does know.

Tillie CLONKS around on the lame foot, lost in a kind of reverie.

TILLIE BREAUX

(skyward)

Oh, my sweet Baybay up in heaven.

I'm coming to you, my baby.

(singing)

e vais te couvrir de bisous...

Quand je te rencontre dans--

WHAM! In her joy, her wooden foot SLIPS and she CLATTERS to the ground.

TILLIE BREAUX

Aiyee...

Lorelei rushes toward her, kneels. Tillie winces in pain.

Her wooden foot is loose and twisted under. Baxter looks at her stump - it's pretty rough looking. She touches what appears to be a sharp bone just under the skin.

TILLIE BREAUX

(in pain)

Ah. That's the one what hurts me.

It's all twis up.

She pushes Lorelei away, struggles to her feet.

TILLIE BREAUX

I ain't gonna miss dis foot.

She steadies herself, limps to the stove and pulls the gull from the slowly boiling water.

TILLIE BREAUX

See, dat bone on the top--

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

The tibia.

TILLIE BREAU

Dat's nice and flat. The plow what
took my foot cut clean through that
one.

SWAK! She HACKS one of the bird's feet off.

TILLIE BREAU

But dat other bone?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

The fibula.

TILLIE BREAU

Twis' up like a lil' corkscrew that
one. It only got mostly cut. My
Papere had to twis' it and twis' it
to get it a' loose.

She demonstrates with the bird's other foot, WRENCHING it
around in a GRISLY display.

TILLIE BREAU

I wasn't nothing but a lil' girl.
Maybe seven.

She twists the gull's foot off.

TILLIE BREAU

That twis' one's the one that hurts
on this block.

As she HACKS the gull into pieces and throws them in a pot.

TILLIE BREAU

I used to have me a nice wood foot
I could put in a shoe and
everything, but it rotted. I had to
make 'em since then.

(wincing)

It ain't stopped hurting me - when
I'm wake, when I'm sleep - for
sixty years.

She picks up the bird's feet and head, kisses 'em.

TILLIE BREAU

Der you go, sweetheart. Now you can
fly for true.

She tosses them out the window. Lorelei sees that the sun is
getting higher, remembers she stole a boat.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I'm, um, in a bit of a hurry. Are
you ready to go?

TILLIE BREAUX
I am. Lemme jus' dress.

Off Mrs. Breaux's look of joy

CUT TO:

INT. MARLIN BAR - DAY

LeBlanc is on the phone as the Bartender looks on.

LEBLANC
(into phone)
Oh, I know where it is. She took it
to Vieux Chateau. (pause) Because
she thinks that old witch's brain
is gonna make her live forever!
(pause) I know it's crazy! That's
what I'm telling you! Just send
somebody out there. I need my
damned boat.

The eavesdropping Bartender shakes his head.

CUT TO:

INT. TILLIE'S SHACK - DAY

Tillie is rifling through some clothes, assembling an outfit.

TILLIE BREAUX
You prob'ly got some medicine for
it, but you can just smother me
wit' a pillah if you like. Is it
gonna hurt me much when you take
them lil bits of mah brains?

LORELEI BAXTER
Uh, no. No. You'll be under
anesthesia.

TILLIE BREAUX
Imma put on my nice dress and den
you can take what you need. Poke me
and bleed me, cut off my other leg
and count the rings. It don't make
no nevermind to me.
And then...

(MORE)

TILLIE BREAU (CONT'D)

You can send me on my way.

(closing her eyes)

Thank you Lord, for answering my prayers at las'.

She holds up a tattered church dress, grins happily.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Uh, you know I can't do the procedure here.

Tillie's smile freezes.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

I should have explained. I'm going to take you New Orleans. I have a boat. I think. There's someone at the hospital who'll get the samples I need.

TILLIE BREAU

I ain't goin' nowhere.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

What?

TILLIE BREAU

If I go out in the world, ain't nobody gonna let you kill me, not even if you try.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

I'll worry about that.

TILLIE BREAU

I said no.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Jesus Christ, would you stop being so goddam selfish?! You have the fucking secret of life inside of you and you're keeping it from me! From everyone!

Tillie looks very hurt by this. She looks up at the crucifixes dangling from the ceiling, swirling around her head, then up past them to the heavens.

LORELEI BAXTER

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. I'm really sorry.

TILLIE BREAU

No, I am being selfish.

She lays the dress back on the bed and walks right up to Lorelei and looks her deep in the eyes.

TILLIE BREAU

I been alone a long time. I been so much about me and Clotilde. I ain't thought a minute about you. You should go.

LORELEI BAXTER

Mrs. Breax, listen to me. I can protect you.

Mrs. Breax actually smiles at this.

TILLIE BREAU

No, cher. I'm gonna protec' you.

She walks over and sits in the chair facing away from Lorelei.

TILLIE BREAU

Now leave outta here and lemme do what I gotta do.

She STRIKES a match, lights the candle under the drapes. And then lights another one. And then another. There's no breeze. The curtains, hanging still, begin to SMOKE as they're licked by the little flames.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Oh, come on.

No response.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Mrs. Breax?

No response. Mrs. Breax's face is hard and intent. But so is Lorelei's. She quietly undoes her belt and slides it out of the loops, stepping behind Tillie's chair.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

I got nothing to lose, either. I'm sorry.

In one swift move, she slips the belt all the way around both Tillie and the chair and PULLS, fastening them together.

TILLIE BREAU

NO!!!

Tillie struggles, but Lorelei has her strapped to the chair.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT BELLAIRE - EVENING

Lorelei drags the chair behind her like a sled, Tillie lashed in place, her ankles and wrists tied with napkins.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I promise I'm not going to hurt you
or let anyone hurt you.

Tillie struggles against the chair, tries to bite Baxter.

TILLIE BREAUX
(in French)
*Je vous tuerai vous fils d'une
chienne. (I'll kill you, you son-of-
a-bitch.)*

Lorelei continues the struggle, dragging the bound old woman to the beach.

TILLIE BREAUX
Turn me a'loose! Allez à l'enfer!

WHUMP! Baxter drops her.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Shit. Sorry.

TILLIE BREAUX
VAUTOUR!! VAUTOUR!!

When she hoists her back up, Tillie's covered with sand and spitting mad.

Lorelei drags the sled/chair to

THE SHORE. She struggles to lift Tillie, then carries her, chair and all, SPLASHING into the water.

IN THE WATER - Lorelei hoists Tillie up onto the boat, barely managing to roll her over the edge with a THUD.

IN THE SURF - Lorelei struggles to shove the boat out into the water. Waves break over her, fill her face with salt water and knock her onto her back. She gets up and shoves on the hull until it's free of the sandy bottom.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I will keep my promise!

TILLIE BREAUX

NO!

WATER CHURNS as VROOUM!! - the engine ROARS to life again.

ON DECK, she slams the controls forward. The chair tips backward, SLAMMING Mrs. Breaux on her back.

The boat LURCHES madly.

TILLIE BREAUX

No! Leave me be! It's a curse I
got! A curse!

Lorelei looks over to see Mrs. Breaux DRAGGING and SLIDING the chair toward the edge of the deck, heading for the water.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Shit.

Lorelei DIVES for her, leaving the wheel unattended. The boat TURNS sharply as she struggles to keep the old lady in the chair from going over the edge.

She manages to get Tillie to the boat's middle, but the boat is listing and starting to make a big circle, bouncing roughly as it cuts over its own wake.

She hooks the back of the chair on a cleat, securing it to the deck. But...

WHURRM - the boat grinds into the sand, having strayed too close to the beach. The propellers GRIND against the bottom. She jumps for the wheel, grabs it and turns. The boat LURCHES free and Baxter steers for the mainland, headed for the distant lights of the ferry landing. But...

RRRRR! The sound of another boat approaching.

A COAST GUARD PATROL BOAT with three Coast Guard Officers is closing in. She throws the boat into reverse and guns it, GRINDING the propellers into the sand again. Smoke comes from the engines. She's beached.

The Coast Guard CAPTAIN speaks through a MEGAPHONE.

CAPTAIN

Kill the engine and step away from
the wheel, ma'am.

The Patrol Boat sidles up. The Captain and the LIEUTENANT leap aboard LeBlanc's boat. The Captain grabs Baxter, pins her against the cabin. He looks down, sees Tillie.

CAPTAIN
On the deck!

The Lieutenant runs over and lifts the chair.

CAPTAIN
What the hell is happening here?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
YOU PROMISED, MRS. BREAUX!

CAPTAIN
QUIET!

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU! JUST LIKE
YOU WANT! I SWEAR TO GOD! I'LL DO
IT!

COAST GUARD CAPTAIN
Into the cabin.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER, Tillie is untied, sitting wrapped in a blanket.

INT. PATROL BOAT, CABIN - DUSK

Lorelei is being held in the cabin.

LIEUTENANT
The vessel's owner reported it
stolen.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I borrowed it. We're friends.

CAPTAIN
Uh,huh. And what is the nature of
your relationship with Mrs. Breaux?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I'm her doctor.

LIEUTENANT
Her Doctor? Okay. What's wrong with
her?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Well, that's what I'm trying to
figure out.

LIEUTENANT

So you tied her to a chair?

Baxter spies a phone among the communications gear of the boat.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

I had to. She's severely demented.
Will that phone call the mainland?

EXT. PATROL BOAT 1, DECK - TWILIGHT

A COAST GUARD DINGHY pulls up. LeBlanc is on deck. He is helped aboard the Patrol Boat, takes in his listing boat.

The Captain shines a flashlight THROUGH THE WINDOW at Baxter.

CAPTAIN

She says you're friends.

LeBlanc doesn't react. The Lieutenant sticks his head out the door.

LIEUTENANT

Now she says she needs to call someone in the hospital in New Orleans. If you're pressing charges, I can't let her do that until she's been processed.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

(from inside)
LeBlanc?! Mr. LeBlanc!

She pulls the LOCKET from her blouse, opens it, and slams it against the glass.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

(through the glass)
This is my little girl! This is April!

LeBlanc is exasperated, but leans in close to see.

CLOSE ON THE LOCKET. SOUND FADES as we and LeBlanc take in the little girl. She's flashing a big, adorable grin. But she's shriveled and bald, with a scarf around her head. She's wrinkled and her eyes are too big - she looks seventy.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (O.S.)

This is my baby. April. She's six!
She has Progeria. Her body is aging way, way too fast.

(MORE)

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 She had heart disease at four. Her
 bone density is deteriorating. She
 broke her hip. Her liver barely
 works. She's in the hospital.

LeBlanc looks up at Lorelei, tears streaming down her face,
 wet and malnourished and terrified.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 She's going to die, Mr LeBlanc. My
 little girl is gonna die and I have
 to stop it. I'll fix your boat.
 I'll give you all the money. I'll
 do anything. Anything. Please.

Anything? LeBlanc looks at Mrs. Breaux, realizing that
 Lorelei must have made the deal with her. He looks back at
 the photo of the shriveled little girl, then up at the
 waiting Captain.

INT. PATROL BOAT, CABIN - NIGHT

The Lieutenant hands Lorelei the phone.

LIEUTENANT
 Just tell them where you want to
 connect.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 (into phone)
 Touro Hospital in New Orleans.

THROUGH THE WINDOW - LeBlanc is talking to the Captain about
 his boat.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (O.S.)
 Hello. This is Dr. Lorelei Baxter.

ON LORELEI as she speaks into the phone.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 I need to speak to Dr. Ken Hoffman,
 please. Skip the service - it's an
 emergency.

THROUGH THE WINDOW, the officers uncoil rope and fasten
 hooks, preparing to pull LeBlanc's boat free of the bottom.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Ken? Hear me out.

CUT TO:

EXT. PATROL BOAT, DECK - EVENING

Mrs. Breaux is tended to as the call continues.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (O.S.)
 One hundred fifty five. (pause) Of course I'm sure. (pause) Because if I'm wrong, you're going to finally do the custody thing and I just got arrested, so yeah. (pause) Yes. Yes! Thank you, Ken. I mean it. This is gonna work. It's gonna work. (pause) Yeah. But to get her there you're going to need a Coroner's Hold.

Coast Guard Officers ready the boats for towing.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (O.S.)
 I know. I know. Ken, I know. It's not ideal. But it'll be easy to get. She's suicidal. Oh, and you're gonna need a sedative. One you can administer without her cooperation.

LeBlanc hops onto his listing boat.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (O.S.)
 I'll stay with her until you get here.

ON LEBLANC'S BOAT, he assesses the damage with a flashlight.

CUT TO:

EXT. PATROL BOAT, DECK - NIGHT

Tillie is gently loaded from this boat onto the dinghy. Lorelei tries to go with, but the Lieutenant stops her.

COAST GUARD LIEUTENANT
 Sorry. You're not to go near Mrs Breaux.

Baxter tries to push past the Lieutenant as the dinghy ROARS to life and Tillie is taken away from her.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 No! I'm her doctor! STOP!!!
 STOP!!!

VROOM! Lorelei is nearly knocked off her feet as the Patrol Boat groans to life and starts tugging on LeBlanc's boat, headed away from Tillie and Vieux Chateau.

ON LEBLANC'S BOAT, LeBlanc sits at the wheel, staring at Lorelei as his boat is dragged off the sand.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GULF OF MEXICO, PATROL BOAT - NIGHT

The Patrol Boat tows LeBlanc's boat. Lorelei sits on the deck bench, not saying a word.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WHARF - NIGHT

The Patrol Boat motors away, leaving LeBlanc and Baxter on the wharf. LeBlanc's listing boat is tied to where the cleat should be. He hops down onto the deck and disappears into the cabin without a word.

CUT TO:

INT. LEBLANC'S BOAT - NIGHT

In the hull, LeBlanc stands in ankle-deep water, holding an empty Snickers bag and his dripping, water-logged pillow when Baxter appears in the doorway.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

I'm sorry about your boat.

LeBlanc SHRUGS, no idea what to say. After an awkward beat, Lorelei turns to go.

LEBLANC

She's precious. Your daughter. You need to go home to her.

Lorelei nods her thanks and hurries off.

CUT TO:

INT. MARLIN BAR, GRANDE BELLE ISLAND - NIGHT

FISHERMEN drink, shoot pool and throw darts.

A big hand grabs a pool ball and stops it. The big hand belongs to Fontenot, the guy Lorelei refused to lance. His elbow is wrapped in a big bandage. He looks healthier, but no less angry. He's staring at the door. The place goes quiet.

IN THE DOORWAY is Lorelei - dirty, skinny, desperate and quaking with hunger.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I need to hire a boat.

No response.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I need to go to Vieux Chateaux.
Right now.

FISHERMAN #2
Why you going out there?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I need to take care of someone.

FONTENOT
HA! God help 'em.

The fishermen all LAUGH.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
That woman out there, Tillie Breaux? She's not a witch, okay? She's a medical miracle. She's a hundred and fifty five years old. Now, there are doctors on their way from New Orleans to collect her for study, but she's going to kill herself before they get here unless I stop her.

Glances are shared among the fishermen. After a beat, the place erupts in LAUGHTER.

ALL
Crazy ass Tillie!/Hoo!/The Witch!/Ha, HA!/Miracle my ass!

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Look, I know--

FONTENOT
No you don't!

MORE LAUGHTER.

BARTENDER

All ya'll shut up!

(to Baxter)

Is that why you been going out there? Because Tillie Breaux told you she was a hundred fifty-five years old?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Yes.

BARTENDER

Hoo, boy. Look, old Tillie says a lot of stuff, but here's the deal. She had a granddaughter--

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Yes, Clotilde. I know.

FISHERMAN

You her know a little better than you think!

BARTENDER

Ya'll shut up! So, Clotilde? She was, uh, kinda messed up. In the head.

FONTENOT

Batshit crazy.

BARTENDER

Yeah. So, apparently when her MawMaw died, Clotilde couldn't, you know, accept it. She couldn't let her go. So... she sorta turned herself into her MawMaw.

LAUGHTER and WHISTLES.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

I don't understand.

FONTENOT

Crazy-ass bitch hacked her own damned foot off!

BARTENDER

Yeah, see, that ain't Tillie Breaux out there - it's Clotilde. The granddaughter. "Tillie" ain't told you all about her?

Lorelei doesn't believe a word of this.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 So... you want me to believe that
 this woman, Clotilde, amputated her
 own foot to pretend to be her
 grandmother?

The bartender SHRUGS - yep.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 (laughing)
 Come on. That's the most ridiculous
 story I've ever heard.

FONTENOT
 No it ain't. The most ridiculous
 story you ever heard was the one
 about the lady who lived to be one
 hundred fifty five years old.

The place ERUPTS in LAUGHTER. Lorelei is shattered.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Does... does LeBlanc know this
 story?

BARTENDER
 Everybody knows.

The LAUGHTER and all SOUND FADES.

DR. BAXTER'S POV - things become dreamlike. Swirling. She can
 no longer hear. Her vision gets faint and blurry as she
 stumbles for the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FERRY LANDING WHARF, GRANDE BELLE ISLAND - NIGHT

The sky over the Gulf of Mexico shimmers with stars. In the
 water, the sliver of the waning moon is shattered and reborn
 over and over as the waves break against the sand.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
*The medical establishment wasn't
 just disappointed when Alexis
 Carrel's immortal chicken cells
 were debunked.*

Lorelei sits gripping the edge of the wharf, exhausted,
 heartbroken and starved, her eyelids fluttering.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
*They were ashamed. As a scientist,
 you're supposed to be skeptical. To
 seek the truth and to accept the
 truth when it's staring you in the
 face.*

Baxter tips her head back and, in doing so, SLIPS off the dock and lands with a THUD in the surf.

IN THE WATER, her frail body lifts and sinks with the waves. We trace the hollows of her cheeks, the sharp bones around her sunken eyes, the thinness of her neck. She's drifting from consciousness. She looks dead.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)
No matter what that truth is.

Her eyes are slits, filled with tears.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 (barely audible)
 I'm sorry, Doodle.

The waves CRASH.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LANDRY RESIDENCE - NIGHT

A miserable Michelle Landry lies in agony, her belly enormous, her sheets stained. Her parents sit by the bed, scared to death.

INT. TARPON MOTEL, ANDRE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Andre lies awake in bed alone.

INT. TILLIE'S SHACK - NIGHT

The dangling crucifix forest is aglow in candle light, swaying together and gently clattering in the breeze.

Mrs. Breaux sits in her chair, watching the candle burn.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

The same moon from above the gulf hangs in the window of the hospital room. Karen Louise stirs, asleep in a chair and sees

IN THE BED, April is asleep.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Ken Hoffman drives through the night toward Grande Belle Island.

EXT. WHARF, GRANDE BELLE ISLAND - NIGHT

In the surf, Lorelei's head bobs around in the water as the tide slowly rises, creeping toward her face.

CUT TO:

INT. TARPON MOTEL, LEBLANC'S ROOM - WEE HOURS

LeBlanc packs a knapsack with his very few belongings. The closet is empty, the drawers are open. He's leaving.

There's a KNOCK on the door. No response. KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK!!!

LEBLANC
Ain't nobody home!

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Open the door!

LEBLANC
Leave me alone.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Open the damned door!

WHAM! WHAM! - whoever it is keeps pounding on the door.

LEBLANC
Okay, okay!

LeBlanc opens the door.

IN THE DOORWAY - Fontenot is there, imposing as ever, the bandage still on his arm where LeBlanc lanced him.

FONTENOT
Something wrong with Michelle
Landry.

He holds up the medical bag that Baxter left at his house.

FONTENOT

I told them that maybe you could help.

Off LeBlanc's look...

CUT TO:

EXT. GRANDE BELLE ISLE, WHARF - DAWN

The ferry nestles against the wharf. A priest, FATHER KEVIN, hops off with a valise, waves his thanks to the boat's driver, Patin. The boat REVS and pulls away.

Father Kevin takes one step before he sees Lorelei laying in the sand next to the wharf. She looks dead.

FATHER KEVIN

Oh, Lord.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY 1 - DAWN

Father Kevin and A FISHERMAN carry Lorelei's wet limp figure down the highway.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHAPEL ON THE GULF, VESTRY - MORNING

Lorelei is laid out on a big wooden table. Music plays in the BG.

Nearby, Father Kevin makes coffee, spooning hot water from a pan into a ceramic drip pot.

He goes about his business, getting ready for church, setting his vestments right on top of Lorelei (it's a tiny room and she's taking up the whole table...). He sugars his coffee.

Lorelei opens her eyes, takes in the church and the priest, hears the music, realizes she's covered in royal purple cloth... What the hell? Is she dead?

FATHER KEVIN

Hello there. You alright?

(beat)

I took you for dead.

(off Lorelei's look)

(MORE)

FATHER KEVIN (CONT'D)

You're not, by the way. Though you look it.

Father Kevin hands her a cup of coffee, gestures to a box of doughnuts.

FATHER KEVIN

Have a doughnut. I bring 'em every month.

Lorelei blinks her eyes into focus, grabs a doughnut, dunks it into the coffee and takes a bite. Intense pleasure and satisfaction wash over her.

FATHER KEVIN

Is there someone I can call?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

No. I just have to get home.

Father Kevin nods, looks Baxter over carefully.

FATHER KEVIN

We can talk after mass if you'd like.

LORELEI BAXTER

Cab I confess something to you?

FATHER KEVIN

(checking his watch)
Long as it isn't too much.

LORELEI BAXTER

I'm a fucking coward. I'm so afraid of my daughter's death that I can't look at her. I can't sit with her. I hide in some... place. Work. Some fantasy. It's what I do. I always hide in some theoretical business because I can't stand the blood and failure and the idea that we just fucking die. Everybody else just seems so brave. April is six and she's fearless.

FATHER KEVIN

Well, you can't make yourself fearless. But you can make yourself brave.

LORELEI BAXTER

I can?

FATHER KEVIN

Sure. Accept your fear and kick ass
anyway. We'll talk after mass.

Lorelei nods, weirdly reassured, and shoves half a doughnut
in her mouth.

WHAM! The front door flies open and there is LeBlanc, sleeves
rolled up, hair disheveled, blood on his shirt. He and Baxter
make awkward eye contact, but say nothing.

LEBLANC

(genuflecting to father
Kevin)

Father. Thank God you's here. You
need to come fast, fast. And bring
a bible.

LeBlanc and Baxter share a glance.

LEBLANC

The Landry girl, Michelle - she's
dying.

Lorelei looks horrified.

FATHER KEVIN

Of course.

LEBLANC

(to Lorelei)

You stay here.

FATHER KEVIN

Yes. Stay right here. There's more
coffee.

Lorelei watches through the door as they leave.

CUTTING BACK AND FORTH:

ON THE ROAD, LeBlanc and Father Kevin hurry through the near-
darkness.

IN THE LANDRY HOUSE, Michelle fades in and out as her mom
weepily holds and kisses her hands.

ON THE ROAD, LeBlanc and Father Kevin continue, with Fontenot
now along.

IN THE CHURCH, Baxter looks up at the wall. There's an old,
faded, tacky inspirational poster above the door.

POSTER

"Teach us to number our days, that
we may gain a heart of wisdom."
Psalm 90:12

And another...

POSTER 2

"If anyone knows the good they
ought to do and doesn't do it, it
is a sin for them."

She stares at the corny, but effective, posters.

LORELEI BAXTER

You gotta be kidding me.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LANDRY RESIDENCE - MORNING

The pregnant teen, Michelle, is in shock, pale, PANTING and wide-eyed. Her mother holds her hand, WEEPING. Her father stands stoically nearby. Andre enters from the kitchen with a towel and hands it to Mrs. Landry.

A gentle KNOCK, then LeBlanc enters. He and Andre share a tense look.

Father Kevin enters and recoils - there is blood everywhere. He quickly regains his composure and, with great calm and care, goes to Mrs. Landry and takes her hand.

FATHER KEVIN

(looking in her eyes)

Be strong and help her. It's a
moment of beauty and peace.

The sobbing mother swallows hard and nods.

FATHER KEVIN

(to LeBlanc)

Please clean up as much as
possible.

LeBlanc gets to work as Father Kevin approaches the stoic Leonce Landry. He places a hand on his shoulder and the man ERUPTS in loud agony, as though Father Kevin's touch has busted a balloon filled with grief.

MR. LANDRY

UAGHHHHH!!!

Mr. Landry collapses against the sofa.

FATHER KEVIN
 (to Mr. Landry)
 Take your daughter's hand, Leonce.

The father does as he's told, taking his daughter's pale hand. Fontenot appears from the kitchen, walks over to Mr. Landry, takes his other hand.

Father Kevin takes out a small vial of anointing oil. He dabs the oil on Michelle's forehead.

FATHER KEVIN
 Through this holy anointing may the
 Lord in his love and mercy fill you
 with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

WEEPING and SNIFFING fill the cabin. A SOB erupts as Father Kevin anoints the girl's palms.

FATHER KEVIN
 May the Lord who frees you from sin
 save you and raise you up.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (O.S.)
 Wait.

They all look up -- Baxter stands in the doorway, propping herself against the door frame. She is weak, pale and shoeless, her hair matted against her head, her eyes red.

FONTENOT
 What the hell you think you doing?

Mrs. Landry pushes Fontenot aside, runs over to Baxter.

MRS. LANDRY
 Please help her.

Baxter takes in the room - all the faces stare her down, especially Fontenot.

She walks over to the girl. She looks in her eyes, takes her pulse.

Mrs. Landry hands her the medical bag. She looks at it like it's radioactive, but opens it, takes out the stethoscope and places it on the girl's belly.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
 Still two heart beats, but they're
 in distress. And she's hemorrhaging
 badly.

Fontenot walks up and looms threateningly over Baxter.

FONTENOT

All a'sudden you a doctor?

Baxter looks right in Fontenot's eyes.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

No. But I'm all you have. And we
won't get these seconds back. Put
her on the table.

LeBlanc sweeps the dining table clear. Father Kevin and the
trembling Mr. Landry lift Michelle onto the table as Baxter
dumps out the medical bag, looks over the crappy, dirty
instruments - sutures in yellowed envelopes, gauze, clamps,
etc. And then she retrieves the scalpel. The sight of it
terrifies her.

She tears open a plastic envelope containing an alcohol pad -
it's dry.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

I need some alcohol, please.
(listening to the
stethoscope again)
And get something metal, like a
knife blade, red hot. Keep it hot.

ANDRE

I got it.

Baxter meets his eyes.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Thank you.

Baxter rummages around in the medical junk, takes out an old
bottle of chloroform. Not exactly what she hoped for, but...

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

LeBlanc? I'm going to need you
to... to just, um...

Swooning. She stops, takes a breath, steadies herself.
Everyone watches nervously. Lorelei takes another deep
breath, concentrates.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

(composing herself)
When I tell you, pour some of this
on a rag and put it over her nose.
The second she closes her eyes,
take it away. Got it?

(MORE)

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (CONT'D)

The second she closes her eyes. If her eyes flutter, put it back for a second.

LeBlanc nods, wets the rag with the CHLOROFORM. Andre enters wearing an oven mitt and holding a lit can of Sterno with a KNIFE laying across the flame.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Perfect. Leave it where I can reach it, please.

Andre sets it on the sideboard. Baxter lifts up the SCALPEL. It GLINTS in the light. She stares it down, breathes deeply and dips it in the vodka that Fontenot has provided.

Then Baxter pulls the teen's skirt down, exposing the great, pink belly. Once again, she flashes back in her mind to medical school, closes her eyes again.

FONTENOT

Goddam it, what's wrong wit you?!!
(to the others)
She cain't do shit!

Baxter opens her eyes - looks at the big man, then at the girl, the weeping family...

Then, like she's dousing a fire, she SPLASHES the vodka all over the teen's belly to sterilize it.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

(recalling a textbook)
"In instances of maternal hemorrhaging... pre-natal cardiac distress, emergency intervention is required to save both lives"

She nods at LeBlanc. LeBlanc shoves the soaked rag under the panting girl's nose.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Andre - get the family out, please.

MRS. LANDRY

NO!

FONTENOT

I'm not leaving her here wit--

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Now, please.

Andre, with Father Kevin's help, hustles the terrified family outside. Father Kevin returns and stands watch with LeBlanc.

Baxter confronts the big belly, scalpel in hand. She looks at LeBlanc and father Kevin, then at the belly.

LEBLANC

Hey - you got this, Doc.

Baxter looks at him, nods her thanks. Then she looks back at Michelle, takes a deep breath.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

(quoting...)

"An initial incision is made from just below the navel to just above the pubic bone, being careful to penetrate the abdominal wall only, leaving the peritoneum in tact..."

Then she drags the scalpel down the belly.

A beautiful bright red line bursts forth under the blade. Baxter glances up at Michelle's face - no reaction, still breathing. She raises the scalpel to go in.

OUTSIDE - The family huddles near the little house, crying and praying.

Shadows pass behind the curtains inside. They stand quietly for a long time. Marsh grass RUSTLES in the wind. The surf LAPS quietly on the nearby sand. The air is filled with distant gulls and a faraway boat motor. With life.

Finally, the door to the house opens and LeBlanc, covered with blood, stands in the doorway.

LEBLANC

BOYS!! IT'S BOYS!!!

As they burst into SMILES and SOBS, LeBlanc runs at them as fast as he can, shouting.

LEBLANC

Oh, man - they... like teensy little, like little wet kitties. But, man, they're so beautiful.

But the family still doesn't dare move.

MRS. LANDRY

Is Michelle...?

LEBLANC

Sawing logs! The Doc says she look pretty good.

MR. LANDRY

I'M A GRAN PERE, ME!!

The little family collapses on itself, imploding with SOBS of joy and peals of LAUGHTER as they run toward the house.

Andre grabs LeBlanc and hugs him. And kisses him. Fontenot looks at them, slaps them both on the back, and runs to join the others.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LANDRY RESIDENCE - MORNING

The family lavishes the sleeping Michelle and the kicking babies with love as Dr. Baxter stands off to the side in a kind of trance.

LeBlanc walks up to her and PUNCHES her in the arm too hard.

LEBLANC

You did it!
(punches her again)
You did it.

Baxter nods.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Couldn't have done it without you.

LEBLANC

Well, dat's true.

Mrs. Landry is there, her face streaked with tears, her eyes red. She walks up and takes Dr. Baxter's hands. She tries to speak, but she's too overwhelmed. She begins to sob, eking out a broken whisper.

MRS. LANDRY

(almost inaudible)
Thank you.

She wraps Baxter in her arms. All the love she has for her family is wrapped around Lorelei in gratitude.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

It was my pleasure.

Baxter remains in her embrace.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
I have daughter, too.

Mrs. Landry looks at her, then squeezes her harder.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER, ON THE LANDRY'S PORCH -

Dr. Lorelei Baxter sits alone, hair still pasted to her head, eyes redder than ever. She's barefoot and she has blood splattered on her clothes. But she is happy and calm - and devouring a sandwich.

Fontenot steps outside with two cans of beer. He extends one to Baxter. She smiles, nods and takes the beer. Fontenot nods and goes back inside. Baxter SNAPS the beer open, takes a sip.

After a moment, Father Kevin comes out and sits next to her. They don't speak for a bit. Then...

FATHER KEVIN
I was talking to Mr. LeBlanc. I
have something to show you.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHAPEL ON THE GULF, BACK ROOM - DAY

It's a tiny little room. In the corner is an old refrigerator with a lock on it. The cord lies on the floor with the plug cut off.

FATHER KEVIN
The Reliquary, such as it is.

He opens the lock...

IN THE FRIDGE/RELIQUARY, there are little things in jars, shreds of cloth, several glass eyes, a hunting knife, a neck brace, etc.

He retrieves a WOODEN BOX, hands it to Baxter.

Baxter opens the box slowly. Inside, something is wrapped in a SATIN CLOTH. She carefully unwraps it and finds... the tiny skeleton of a child's foot.

FATHER KEVIN
I says it's been here since
eighteen seventy three.
(MORE)

FATHER KEVIN (CONT'D)

The instructions are to bury it
with her when she dies.

Father Kevin SHRUGS. Baxter gently feels the end of one of
the bones.

FATHER KEVIN

Can you tell from this if it's a
match? If she's... if it's really
her?

Baxter feels the end of the other bone. She SMILES.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Holy shit.

Father Kevin crosses himself. Then Lorelei's head SNAPS up.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Oh, no.

CUT TO:

INT. TILLIE'S CAMP, BEDROOM - DAY

IN TILLIE'S SHACK, Tillie's hands move slowly, but with
purpose, strapping on her on her big, wooden foot.

IN THE CHURCH YARD, Baxter bursts through the door, followed
by Father Kevin.

AT TILLIE'S, her ancient hands now button the front of her
church dress.

ON THE WHARF, Baxter leads Fr. Kevin, LeBlanc and Fontenot to
the wharf.

FONTENOT

It's down here!

They climb the wharf to Fontenot's boat.

LEBLANC

Don't let her drive. Seriously.

ON VIEUX CHATEAU, Tillie leaves her shack, dressed in her
Sunday best, leaving the door open behind her.

AT THE WHARF, Fontenot's boat pulls into the gulf, headed for
the island.

ON THE MAINLAND, a large power boat pulls away from the dock. On the deck is a gurney, tanks of oxygen, several medical bags, three technicians, and Dr. Ken Hoffman.

ON VIEUX CHATEAUX ISLAND, Tillie walks across the sand and steps up onto the lower rocks of the fort wall.

IN THE GULF, Fontenot's boat speeds toward the island. Lorelei is on the prow, facing forward into the wind, her face full of calm purpose.

AT THE FORT WALL, Tillie climbs.

IN THE CHAPEL, Father Kevin enters the church. The congregation is already assembled, waiting.

FATHER KEVIN

The word of our Lord. We are bold
to say...

ON THE POWER BOAT, Dr. Ken Hoffman looks out at the approaching island.

IN THE GULF, Fontenot's boat lurches over the waves.

FATHER KEVIN (O.S.)

"Our father, who art in heaven..."

ON VIEUX CHATEAU, Tillie stands, dressed in her church clothes, atop the wall of the fort, holding her rosary.

CONGREGATION(O.S.)

Hallowed be thy name.

IN THE CHAPEL, the kneeling congregation prays.

CONGREGATION

Thy Kingdom come...

IN THE GULF, Baxter stands on the prow, water splashing in her face.

CONGREGATION (O.S.)

Thy will be done...

ON VIEUX CHATEAU, Tillie closes her eyes, silently counting the beads and praying.

CONGREGATION (O.S.)

*On Earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day, our daily
bread...*

IN THE CHAPEL, the congregation continues.

CONGREGATION

*And forgive us our trespasses.
As we forgive those who trespass
against us...*

ON VIEUX CHATEAU, Tillie stands on the wall clutching her rosary beads, the wind whipping her clothes around her.

CONGREGATION (O.S.)

*And lead us not into temptation...
But deliver us from evil.*

Tillie lets the rosary drop around her neck, looks skyward, spreads her arms.

CONGREGATION (O.S.)

Amen."

Then she jumps.

IN THE GULF, Baxter, on the prow of Fontenot's boat, looks up and sees

THE WALL OF THE FORT, as Tillie sails from it and toward the water, dress flapping behind her, hair unfurling.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

No. NO!

She SPLASHES into the waves.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

She's there! Go!

IN THE GULF, Baxter points, shouting.

FONTENOT

I can't get no closer on this side!
They got a sand bar!

O.S. - the congregation begins to SING.

IN THE GULF, Tillie bobs to the surface, her dress spread around her like a rippling island.

IN THE CHAPEL, the congregation SINGS.

IN THE GULF, Tillie bobs on the waves.

ON FONTENOT'S BOAT, Baxter climbs over the rail and DIVES into the water.

IN THE WATER, she surfaces, swims against the waves, grabs Tillie, and struggles to haul her toward the shore.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. VIEUX CHATEAU ISLE, BEACH - DAY

Over the booming pleas of the congregation's HYMN...

WHUMP! Baxter drops the limp, soaking Mrs. Breaux onto the beach. She leans over her, listens for a heart beat.

She starts CPR, pounding and breathing. She listens again, pounds on her again and forces air into her lungs. She listens one more time. Nothing.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Come on, Tillie.

She takes a final, deep breath, leans down...

PHLUGH! Mrs. Breaux SPITS up water - she's alive.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Yes! Ha-ha! Oh, thank God.

Lorelei drops her head onto Tillie's chest and breathes heavily, catching her breath. Then she gets up, puts her arms under Tillie's and drags her through the sand toward the shack.

It's tough sledding, as Lorelei is trying be gentle this time. As she reaches the shadows near the shack, she hears

O.S. - VOICES. She looks up and sees

SILHOUETTED ON THE WALL, Ken Hoffman and a crew laden with gear, a little conquering army come to collect their prize.

Lorelei takes them in, then drags Tillie toward the door.

CUT TO:

INT. TILLIE'S SHACK - DAY

Lorelei struggles to drag and flop Tillie onto her little bed. She straightens her wet old church dress and smooths her hair. Tillie draws labored breath after labored breath, looking very peaceful - almost smiling.

O.S. - the VOICES get louder.

Lorelei looks at Mrs Breaux, then around the room.

LORELEI'S POV - the burned candles and the gull bones, the clattering crucifixes, the broken furniture, the picture frames.

ON THE FRAMES, the images are faded, the loved ones now no more than faint outlines, ghosts whose memories are drifting away with time.

The room isn't a witch's hovel or a shrine, it's a relic. A dying husk that once held life but is no longer able or willing.

Lorelei strokes Tillie's hair like she's a child, kisses her forehead.

Holding back tears, she picks up a pillow, fluffs it, lifts it...

CUT TO:

EXT. VIEUX CHATEAU ISLE, TILLIE'S SHACK - DAY

Dr. Hoffman and three ASSISTANTS head toward the shack with a gurney, a board, restraints, and bags of gear. With them is a DEPUTY with a GUN. Ken KNOCKS on the door.

INT. TILLIE'S SHACK - DAY

Ken steps in and finds Lorelei standing among the crucifixes, lit by candles, waiting for him. Behind her Tillie is laid out, hands across her chest. Lorelei shakes her head.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Dirt and butterflies.

DR. KEN HOFFMAN
What?

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
She's gone.

Ken looks furious and then -- heartbroken.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Ken.

DR. KEN HOFFMAN
I guess I kinda thought...

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
It's okay. It's really okay.

Lorelei puts a hand on his shoulder. With her touch, tears fill his eyes.

She wraps her arms around him and they cry quietly in the weird, makeshift little temple.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT BELLAIRE, VIEUX CHATEAU ISLAND - EVENING

Lorelei, Ken and Ken's team carry a gurney board draped with Tillie and her blanket away from the shack.

BEHIND THEM, the curtain blows inside through the open window. THROUGH THE GLASS, we see the curtain flit about, just over the flame of the candle.

CUT TO:

EXT. FONTENOT'S BOAT, GULF OF MEXICO - EVENING

As the boat heads away from the island, Lorelei looks back. Above the walls of the fort, FLAMES lick the air and PLUMES OF ASH rise and fall as Tillie's shack BURNS. A smile breaks across Lorelei's face.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHURCH CEMETERY - DAY

All of the island is there as Father Kevin sets the tiny box with the tiny foot in the casket and closes the lid. He turns to the crowd, opens his book.

FATHER KEVIN
The Rites of the Damned. Taking a
life, even your own, is a grave sin
in the eyes of--

LEBLANC
Wait.

Suddenly, LeBlanc is next to him, whispering in his ear. Father Kevin's eyes go round with the information. He gathers himself and flips pages in the book.

FATHER KEVIN
The Rites of the Saved.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The living room is bright and full of toys and posters. Seven popsicle stick crosses dangle in the breeze of the ceiling fan, diffusing the light.

Lorelei Baxter, noticeably less malnourished, sits on the edge of the sofa where her daughter lays nuzzling a FERRET (RIZZO).

APRIL
Rizzo? Hey, Riz. Gimme a kiss.

In the chair across the room is Karen Louise, reading.

KAREN LOUISE
You're kissing a rat.

APRIL
Yep. He's a beautiful little rat boy. Aren't you Rizzolio?

DR. KEN HOFFMAN
He is quite handsome.

Sitting across the room is Ken with his wife and their kids.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
And hypo-allergenic. And only three pounds.

HUTCH
I want one!

DR. LORELEI BAXTER
Isn't your birthday coming up soon?

MONICA HOFFMAN
Oh, God. Don't even.

There's a KNOCK. Lorelei gets up and opens the door and there's Leblanc.

LEBLANC
Hey, Doctor Socrates! Looking good.

Then they all file in. Father Kevin, the whole Landry family, Fontenot.

And Andre, wearing a Tarpon Motel polo shirt that matches Leblanc's. They swarm the room, filling it with energy and joy.

April sits up, amazed. Karen Louise looks a little scared.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER

Everyone - this is... my island family.

GANG

So, pleased!/There she is!/You must be April/Are you Karen Louise? I read all your Telexes/We brought beer.

Mrs. Landry steps forward and takes April's hand.

MRS. LANDRY

April? We came all this way to meet you and to thank you for lending us her momma. And to show you what she done.

Michelle steps forward with the twins.

APRIL

Babies?!

MICHELLE

Your mommy saved their lives. And mine, too. You wanna hold one?

April SQUEALS as Hutch takes the ferret and Michelle hands April a baby.

There is much COOING and LAUGHING as April snuggles a baby, the gang catches up with Lorelei, and Karen Louise holds the other infant.

DR. LORELEI BAXTER (V.O.)

Leonard Hayflick ultimately spent his entire career speaking out against the science of life extension. It's foolish, he claims, to try and make life longer. And he may be right. But that doesn't mean there isn't more to be had.

Lorelei sits next to April and, as April fusses over the tiny baby boy, wraps her arms around her little girl and kisses her on the top of her head.

FADE TO BLACK