

IVF'D

"The Other Side"

Pilot

Written by
Kate Torgovnick May

Based on the blog by
Lizz Torgovnick

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4027 W Avenue 40
Los Angeles, CA 90065
917-226-0556
Katetor@gmail.com

TEASER

FADE IN:

CLOSE ON a female face. One whose mouth is doing strange things as she chews the end of a HIGHLIGHTER.

INT. NURSES' STATION - DAY

This is DR. ALEX BLOOM (35) -- brilliant and blunt, a control freak cloaked in a Patti Smith exterior. Her smudged eyeliner and mussed hair contrast sharply with her lab coat.

She's standing with NURSE JASMINE ADAMS (25). A very nervous PATIENT in the distance.

ALEX
(half whispering)
Take him to Sample Room 1. And tell
him not to take too long.

The 'him' in question is MARK THOMPSON (38). He squirms. Definitely heard that last part.

ALEX (CONT'D)
(to Mark)
See you on the other side.

As Alex exits, cue the MUSIC. Something cheesily delightful like Rex Orange County's "Loving is Easy."

INT. BRIGHT WHITE HALLWAY - DAY

Jasmine sashays in SLOW MOTION, like a naughty nurse fantasy come to life. Mark walks sheepishly behind her.

CLOSE ON the MEDICAL SAMPLE CUP clasped in her hand. The label reads: FERTILE GROUND REPRODUCTIVE SERVICES.

Jasmine arrives at a door. She opens it and gives Mark instructions. He avoids eye contact.

INT. SAMPLE ROOM 1 - DAY

The door closes. Mark looks around. He approaches a stack of MAGAZINES -- fanned out from *Playboys* to tentacle porn. He selects *MAJOR MILFS*.

Pants hit the floor. Mark kneels on them. He studies a page in the magazine. Reaches down. And starts to, well, you know.

As the MUSIC continues, we lift up and begin to FLY OVER the clinic in a loop...

INT. SAMPLE ROOM 2 - DAY

Another MAN does his thing, leaning back in an easy chair.

INT. EXAM ROOM 1 - DAY

As DR. RACHEL GEMINI (39) finishes a pelvic exam, she hands her patient a TROPHY. Smiles big.

INT. EXAM ROOM 2 - DAY

DR. SIMON TURNER (58) performs an ultrasound. He points to a tiny dot. A WOMAN gasps. Her HUSBAND strains to see.

INT. EXAM ROOM 3 - DAY

A MAN coughs as DR. NIGEL SHAHIDI (38) cups his crotch.

INT. EXAM ROOM 4 - DAY

Patient MISSY THOMPSON (38), who we'll soon find out is Mark's wife, looks faint. A NURSE is taking blood.

INT. BREAK ROOM - DAY

A NURSE pounds on a VENDING MACHINE. Her snack is stuck.

INT. RECEPTION - DAY

RECEPTIONISTS scurry at a desk. Beyond them, a waiting room with modern furniture, orchids, a breakfast spread. PATIENTS check their phones. Anxiously study their fingernails.

INT. LAB - DAY

A maze of shiny equipment. LAB TECHS in scrubs and hairnets.

In the back, conflict-averse Lab Director LANDON LENNOX (33) checks the settings on a MICROSCOPE. Then checks again.

And over the wall...

INT. SAMPLE ROOM 1 - DAY

...Mark, still going. The clinic FLY-OVER and MUSIC END.

INT. LAB - DAY

Alex enters, scribbling on a CHART as she crosses to Landon. She looks up at an EMPTY SHELF on the wall.

ALEX
He's not done yet?

LANDON
I mean ... it's only been-

ALEX
Oh, come on! His wife gave six
vials of blood! All he has to do is
rub one out.

They're startled by the squeak of opening HINGES. Alex turns.

INT. SAMPLE ROOM 1 - CONTINUOUS

Mark Thompson has opened the MEDICINE CABINET in his room and discovered that it has no back -- it opens right into the lab.

He finds himself eye-to-eye with Alex. He jumps.

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

As Mark places his sample on the shelf, face full of shame, Alex tries to make herself invisible. *But why is he taking so long?* She looks at her watch and bites her lip.

Alex crouches down. She begins to squat-walk to the shelf. Now underneath it, she reaches up. Her hand passing right in front of Mark's face.

She feels around for the sample cup. Mark nudges it closer. And finally, she grabs hold.

As she pulls it down, smash to...

OPENING TITLES: IVF'd

ACT ONE

INT. DR. BLOOM'S OFFICE - DAY

Alex's office is sleek and stylish. On the walls, MEDICAL AWARDS mix with POSTERS of Blondie and Bowie.

Mark and Missy Thompson sit on the COUCH, posture rigid. They wait for Alex to say something. Anything.

But she just sits at her DESK, marking a CALENDAR in their FILE.

ALEX (V.O.)

Well, these guys fucked up. They really should've come to me after six months of trying instead of waiting two freaking years. But hey, what are gonna do? When nature fails, I step in.

Mark studies his knees. Missy scratches her neck.

ALEX (V.O.)

A decade ago, I would've had to tell them: you can't have kids together. But fertility medicine is powerful stuff. It isn't always easy. It isn't always pretty. But with 79% of my patients, there's a baby in the end. (beat) I'll get to 80%. Soon.

Alex looks up. Sees Mark and Missy staring. She smiles oddly.

ALEX (V.O.)

Top five things patients do that drive me nuts: #1, cross the six-month line without realizing it's a warning sign. And #2: Look at me like that.

A PINK POST-IT seems to FLUTTER on Alex's computer, like it's calling her. It reads: "ASK QUESTIONS." She looks at it quizzically. *Where did that come from?*

ALEX

So ... what do you do?

MISSY

I'm an entertainment lawyer.

MARK

I'm ... a ... chef.

And Alex is highlighting their file again. The SQUEAK of marker tip on paper fills the room.

Alex tries to think of another question. Her eyes land on the only PHOTO on her desk -- she and husband NEIL BLOOM (36), beaming on their wedding day.

ALEX

And ... how did you meet?

MISSY

On the Red line.

MARK

It's a funny story, actually. She was reading *Infinite Jest*, which-

Mark and Missy go BLURRY in Alex's field of vision. She watches Mark talk. Then Missy take over. She forces a smile.

ALEX (V.O.)

Thing patients do that drive me nuts #3: Make small talk into long talk. This is gonna take a while.

Alex tries to focus on Mark.

MARK

The conductor said-

On Missy, giggling.

MISSY

The whole car-

Alex shuffles papers in their file. She's surprised to find another POST-IT. "BE NICE." She sighs.

ALEX

(interrupting)

Wow. That's a ... story. But let's talk about your tests. Missy, your follicle counts are, meh. Workable.

Missy looks hurt.

ALEX (CONT'D)

But there's a bigger problem.

Mark and Missy lock hands, bracing themselves.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Mark, your sperm count is-

MARK

I know. It's ... low.

ALEX

It's acute oligospermia. The normal range is 40 to 300 million per milliliter. You're at 3 million.

MARK

I ... I know what happened. A few years ago, I went to a bachelor party in Vegas. Our suite had this hot tub—

He goes blurry again.

ALEX (V.O.)

Here we go. I swear, 50% of my job is unGoogling what people Googled. Thing patients do #4...

She nods, trying to look like she's listening.

MARK

—I didn't mean to fall asleep—

ALEX (V.O.)

Cling to the hope that their issue is something they did rather than who they are. Sometimes it's just genetic.

MARK

I boiled my balls, didn't I?

Missy swats at Mark's shoulder. Alex laughs.

MISSY

What? This isn't funny.

ALEX (V.O.)

It's a *little* funny.

ALEX

Sorry. Studies show you'd need extreme exposure extremely often to do any lasting damage. I bet it's a genetic factor.

Mark shakes his head. He's not accepting that.

ALEX (CONT'D)

The bottom line is: you need a count of 5 million for IUI.

MISSY
 (challenging)
 But we did four rounds of IUI at
 our last clinic.

Alex opens her desk drawer. Rolls her highlighters.

ALEX
 You weren't at a fertility *clinic*.
 You were at a fertility *factory*.
 They tried A, B, and C – again and
 again – taking your money without
 considering the complexities of
 your case. I, on the other hand,
 will look at all the possibilities.

MARK
 The clinic ... um, factory ... had
 me taking steroids?

ALEX
 Steroids *could* increase your count,
 but it takes months. You don't have
 that kind of time. Given her age.

MISSY
 My *age*?

ALEX
 Egg quantity and quality decline
 quickly through the late 30s. And
 you're 38. Every month you spend
 trying to up his sperm count is
 time off your clock.

Tears well in Missy's eyes. Mark tries to comfort her.

MISSY
 But – I've been doing acupuncture.

ALEX
 There's no evidence acupuncture has
 any effect on fertility. But it *is*
 good practice.

MISSY
 Practice?

ALEX
 For the needles. When we do in
 vitro fertilization.

MARK
 No. No. We talked about it. IVF is–

MISSY
Not for us!

ALEX (V.O.)
And there's #5.

She pauses, collects herself.

ALEX
IVF can shave months – even years –
off the treatment process.

MARK
But it's so ... expensive.

ALEX
You could've done a cycle with what
you spent on IUI.

MISSY
It's so many hormones!

ALEX
It requires carefully-timed
injections, yes. But it's really
your best bet.

MARK
But it's ... it's–

ALEX
It isolates the process outside of
the body, meaning I have much more
control. IVF'll give you a 1 in 3
chance of getting pregnant per
cycle. A big improvement.

Missy turns to Mark for help.

MARK
Is there, maybe, another doctor we
could talk to?

Alex leans back.

ALEX (V.O.)
Guess I need to make it top six.

ALEX
Sure. Plenty. You can call around,
but I bet after you give your ages,
most will tell you they're booked.
A lot of doctors avoid cases like
yours to protect their numbers.

Mark looks unsettled. Missy is ready to cry.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Look, I will try to keep other options in the running, but it comes down to what the next few tests show. (beat) And if at any point, you want to get serious—

Missy shoots daggers from her eyes. Alex looks down at their file to remind herself of their names.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Missy, Mark. I will do everything in my power to make you parents.

Mark and Missy sit blank-faced. On a poster over their heads, Alex spots another POST-IT. "REASSURE THEM." She thinks. Hard. And comes up with something.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Imma put a baby in you.

Off Mark and Missy, gobsmacked...

INT. RECEPTION — DAY

Alex walks the Thompsons out. She hands their file to NURSE NIA SMITH (45), whose dreadlocks dangle over her scrubs.

ALEX

Book her for an HSG and him for urology with Dr. Shahidi.

NIA

Couldn't convince 'em?

Nia holds out a hand. Alex puts a \$5 BILL in it. Moves.

INT. HALLWAY — DAY

In the distance, Alex watches Dr. Rachel Gemini -- Fertile Ground's OB-GYN -- wide-eyed and bubbly, the kind of woman birds help dress for the ball -- hug a PATIENT with a TROPHY.

The patient leaves, and Alex swoops in.

ALEX

Trophies? Really?

Rachel smiles. Someone's noticed her going above and beyond.

RACHEL

Annual exams aren't fun. I want to reward patients.

ALEX

They got a pap smear. They didn't win the spelling bee.

Rachel isn't rising to the bait. She starts to walk. Alex follows, slipping the "Be Nice" Post-It from her pocket.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Any idea where these came from?

RACHEL

Oh, did they help?!

ALEX

There's no room for warm fuzzies in reproductive endocrinology.

RACHEL

Of course there is. Imagine if you're the first doctor in Chicago to hit an 80% success rate – *and* you're friendly and positive and your patients love you.

ALEX

My patients love when I figure out what's wrong with them. I don't need personalized engraving.

Rachel eyes her skeptically.

ALEX (CONT'D)

What?

They pass the "Operating Theater." Alex grabs Rachel and pulls her through the door.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Dr. Turner has an embryo transfer!

INT. OBSERVATION CHAMBER – DAY

Alex and Rachel stand in a staff-only area. As they look through a two-way mirror...

INT. OPERATING THEATER – DAY

Dr. Simon Turner -- Fertile Ground's founder, the Neil deGrasse Tyson of fertility medicine -- sits on a stool. He adjusts his PHILOSOPHER'S GLASSES over his SURGICAL MASK.

He has patient LINDSAY GOLDEN (36), in a GOWN, lie down. An EMBRYOLOGIST enters with a PETRI DISH. What's inside is remarkably unremarkable -- just a drop of pink liquid.

SIMON
Isn't it amazing?

LINDSAY
Is what amazing?

The embryologist places the dish under a MICROSCOPE. On a SCREEN, we see a circle with cells around its perimeter.

SIMON
Your embryo. So many things have to happen just right for it to exist. Doesn't it boggle the mind?

As Lindsay nods, transfixed, the embryologist uses a LONG INSTRUMENT to suck up the liquid. Hands it to Simon.

INT. OBSERVATION CHAMBER - DAY

Alex and Rachel watch a SCREEN as Simon angles the instrument toward the uterus. As the embryo's released, it almost GLOWS.

ALEX
That gives me goosebumps.

RACHEL
I get them too. During deliveries.

ALEX
Sure, but you wouldn't have half as many without me and Dr. Turner. We create lives.

RACHEL
OB-GYNs save lives...

ALEX
So do life jackets.

Rachel sighs.

RACHEL
And on that note, I'm out.

ALEX
Stop. I'm kidding. You know you're better than a flotation device.

RACHEL

Not that. It's Nurse Lucy's one year workiversary. I got her a cake.

Alex shoots her a look.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

It's nice to celebrate people once in a while.

ALEX

You celebrate when someone gets a haircut.

Rachel rolls her eyes.

RACHEL

Are you coming?

ALEX

Haven't stepped in the break room in months. Not ending the streak.

RACHEL

You do you.

Alex flashes a thumbs-up and Rachel backs through the door. Now alone, Alex watches Simon place a reassuring hand on Lindsay's shoulder.

Alex studies the gesture, taking in its tenderness. She lifts an arm and tries it.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Rachel exits, bumping into Dr. Nigel Shahidi, Fertile Ground's cocky urologist, on his PHONE. He's Iranian-American, an aging frat boy who swears by hair gel.

Rachel smiles and gestures to the break room. Nigel holds up a finger -- in a minute.

NIGEL

Yeah Mom, I'll get a reservation. You need to try the deep dish.

As he listens, he steps on a SCALE. Gawks at the number.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

Dad, no one cares about my GPA.

(pausing)

(MORE)

NIGEL (CONT'D)

No, we won't get better Cubs seats
because I own my own practice.

A NURSE approaches with a PATIENT and gives Nigel a look.
His practice? He shrugs and pivots into...

INT. OBSERVATION CHAMBER - DAY

Nigel crashes in -- and catches Alex, arm up, petting the
air. She instantly drops it. Nigel puts his phone on mute.

NIGEL

Can I have the room?

ALEX

I'm watching a procedure! Take it
in your office.

NIGEL

My office is tiny and depressing,
and I have to share it with-

NIGEL'S DAD (O.S)

NIGEL?!

NIGEL

(unmuting)
One sec.

Nigel looks through the two-way mirror and sees Simon leading
Lindsay Golden out of the operating theater.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

Procedure's over. *Please* can I have
the room? It's my parents.

Alex sighs. And rises.

ALEX

Fine. But I'm standing my ground-
(loudly, into phone)
-next time you want to bang an
inappropriately young nurse.

Nigel shows her the MUTE is still on. He watches as she exits.
Then whips his phone back to his ear.

NIGEL

Sorry. Another emergency the staff
needed me to solve.

(pausing)

I know you guys want to visit, but
there's this airborne ... bacteria.
I can't let you be exposed.

(MORE)

NIGEL (CONT'D)

I need to get my mask back on.

(pausing)

Yeah. (beat) See you soon.

Nigel hangs up. And off him feeling a little bad for lying...

INT. RECEPTION – DAY

There's tension in the CROWDED waiting room. All eyes follow Simon, entering with a CHART.

SIMON

Emma Fowler?

A WELL-DRESSED WOMAN in her 40s stands. Simon nods. Then noticing the 11-year-old GIRL in front of him, arm extended for a handshake.

INT. DR. TURNER'S OFFICE – DAY

Simon's brow furrows as EMMA FOWLER, the girl, talks a mile a minute. SARAH FOWLER, her mother, watches her too.

EMMA

The second I felt the lump, I knew it was cancer because it was dense and solid and we'd *just* talked about that in school. But my parents were all, "Emma, it's probably just a cyst. It's probably just a swollen gland." It was thyroid cancer.

Guilt registers on Sarah's face. Emma doesn't notice.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I had surgery – which was the worst – but the doctors couldn't get the whole tumor. So I have to do chemo.

Simon reacts with concern.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I've been reading up on it, and the chemo can take my hair. It can make me tired and nauseous and ick. But the drug I'm taking damages eggs. And there is *no way* the cancer's taking my reproductive options. So I need you to freeze my eggs.

Emma nods, excitedly, as he takes this in. Simon looks to Sarah. She nods too.

SIMON

I see. How old are you, Emma?

EMMA

11. 12 in March.

SIMON

And have you started your period?

EMMA

No, but any day. My friend Kaitlyn got hers two months ago.

SIMON

It breaks my heart to say this, but there isn't much we can do for you.

Emma looks at him. *Adults: no imagination.* She fishes in her BACKPACK for an IPAD. Launches into a KEYNOTE presentation.

EMMA

I haven't gotten my period, which means my eggs aren't mature. But scientists have known for years that women are born with all the egg cells they'll ever have.

SIMON

Recent research has complicated that, but yes.

Emma clears her throat. He gestures that she has the floor. Next SLIDE.

EMMA

If all those egg cells are in there, why not use them? Scientists in California are freezing undeveloped eggs for kids like me. Scientists in Italy are preserving ovarian tissue. Their patients are as young as 5.

Simon nods, slowly. He takes off his glasses.

SIMON

Emma, I'm very impressed with this. But while this research is fascinating, it's still very experimental. There's no way for eggs to mature out of the ovaries.

EMMA

Now. But what about in 20 years?! Ten years ago, we didn't have this.

She waves her iPad. And Simon considers. He looks to Sarah.

SIMON
Can I speak with you a moment?

INT. HALL – DAY

Sarah follows Simon out.

SIMON
I want to make sure you understand
this is highly unconventional. Not
at all a guarantee.

SARAH
I do, yes.

SIMON
And you think *she* understands that?

SARAH
She *really* wants this. And I'm for
anything that gives her hope.

INT. OFFICE – DAY

Simon and Sarah return to Emma, on the edge of her seat.

SIMON
Emma, I am skeptical. But I would
like to schedule an ultrasound to at
least *see* what we are dealing with.

Emma claps and squeals.

INT. HALLWAY – DAY

Simon watches the Fowlers leave. Alex walks up behind him.

ALEX
Little young for a surrogate.

Simon looks at her, but can't quite muster a response.
He rolls off.

Alex shrugs. And we begin to track with her in a stylized
HYPER SPEED MONTAGE, moving through her day on fast-forward.

A) INT. EXAM ROOM 1 – DAY – Alex pops in and out. She checks
a WOMAN's neck glands. Demonstrates to a HUSBAND where to
deliver a shot in his wife's buttocks.

B) INT. DR. BLOOM'S OFFICE – DAY – Alex is at her desk, marking up a CALENDAR. Then another. And another.

C) INT. LAB – DAY – Alex looks over Landon's shoulder. Thumps him on the head.

END HYPERSPEED, returning to normal time. And DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LAB – EVENING

The lab techs are gone. The only people remaining are Fertile Ground's partners -- Simon, Alex, Rachel, Nigel and Landon. Simon stands, drawing on a WHITE BOARD. Everyone else sits.

SIMON

Our success rates are astounding, for fresh and thawed. But I'm concerned about our patient ratings. We've gone down a half star since our last quarterly check-in. So I'd love for all of us to focus on being warm and kind to every patient who comes through our door.

Rachel nods enthusiastically. And Nigel just glares at Alex.

NIGEL

All of us?

SIMON

Yes. Because we're a team. We work together.

NIGEL

Four of us are a team. The fifth is a ball hog who—

He's not sure where he's going with this analogy. But Alex realizes he's talking about her.

ALEX

Me?

NIGEL

Obviously you.

ALEX

I gave you the observation room!

NIGEL

After getting in a snipe!

ALEX

Oh, grow a pair!

SIMON

Alex, Nigel – let's not make this personal.

NIGEL

It is personal!

(to Alex)

Have you even looked at your ZocDoc rating? It's embarrassing.

ALEX

Sorry, Sultan of Tinder. I don't get my self-worth from an app.

Nigel rises. Rachel instinctively moves between him and Alex.

SIMON

Dr. Bloom!

ALEX

(to Nigel)

Just because you plays with dicks all day doesn't mean you have to be one.

NIGEL

The penis is a complex organ!

SIMON

Nigel, please. I'll handle this.

NIGEL

Then handle it. Stop giving her a pass for her attitude. What kind of medical professional acts this way?

Alex pretends to stroke a penis in his direction. Rachel grabs her hands – but it's too late. Simon whips off his glasses.

SIMON

(exploding)

That is quite enough! Alex, you need to filter what you say – with your colleagues *and* with your patients.

ALEX

I filter with my patients.

Landon accidentally snorts. Everyone else just looks at her, surprised that she seems to believe this.

ALEX (CONT'D)

I do! Earlier, I had two patients who met over *Infinite Jest*, and I didn't even point out that David Foster Wallace killed himself.

SIMON
You want credit for this omission?

ALEX
Maybe a little?

SIMON
What were those patients' names?

ALEX
Mmm- Mmm- Miiiike and-

SIMON
Mark and Missy Thompson.

ALEX
Mark and Missy. Right. How did you-

SIMON
-I know because they posted on a message board this afternoon saying they didn't like your tone.

ALEX
(genuinely surprised)
What? No, we had ... good vibes.

Simon takes out his PHONE and toggles.

SIMON
(reading)
"Has anyone gone to Dr. Bloom at Fertile Ground? She was RUDE and berated us and said, 'Imma put a baby in you,' which is CREEPY!"
The post ends with a 911 emoji.

Landon and Rachel will themselves to disappear. Nigel, meanwhile, slow-claps in Alex's direction. She squints, but knows better than to do more.

SIMON (CONT'D)
(to Alex)
You *berated* them?

ALEX
That's not the word I'd choose.

SIMON
But you did choose the words, "Imma put a baby in you?"

ALEX
Yes. But I said it reassuringly!
Like, "Don't worry. I've got you.
Imma put a baby in you."

Everyone is slack-jawed. Simon just shakes his head.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Does it matter what I say if I get them pregnant?

SIMON

Does a neurosurgeon's bedside manner matter if the case is terminal?

Nigel is loving this -- he might as well be eating popcorn. Alex glares at him. Then back at Simon. She stands up.

ALEX

(to Simon)

I'm sorry, this is ridiculous. Do you want warm fuzzies or results?

Simon looks Alex squarely in the eyes.

SIMON

I expect you to deliver both.

Alex feels cut. She holds Simon's gaze for a longer-than-comfortable beat. Then makes a show of gathering her things.

ALEX

Those success rates you're so proud of? They're high because of me. Getting those kind of results requires being blunt with patients. If it hurts their feelings...

She shrugs. And she storms out, defiantly. The other doctors exchanging what-just-happened glances. Simon rubs his temples, glasses still in hand.

EXT. FERTILE GROUND - NIGHT

Alex walks out. As the door slams behind her, the cold air hits her. She looks up. And through a vapor cloud...

ALEX

Fuck.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. BAR – NIGHT

Alex enters a crowded Chicago brewpub. She squeezes by patrons in GROUPS. Passes an MC.

MC
Hey nerds. Who's ready for Trivia
Tuesday?!

People whoop. In the back, Alex spots Neil Bloom -- the man from her wedding photo -- handsome, funny, an aesthete who'll spend a month on a Halloween costume. She weaves toward him.

ALEX
(giving a quick kiss)
Hey.

NEIL
Hey. I thought you were forfeiting.

ALEX
Yeah right, and you won Publishers
Clearing House!

She takes off her coat. Looks askance at his MILITARY JACKET.

NEIL
(beaming)
My team name is "Army of One."
Beat it.

Neil slides Alex a TRIVIA SHEET. These two don't play on the same team -- they prefer to compete against each other.

Alex jots down her team name: "Doctor Superior." Smiles.

ALEX (V.O.)
Neil and I have been together
forever. Almost 20 years now. We
didn't meet-cute over a pretentious
book. We met in high school.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALL – FLASHBACK – DAY

A pair of interlocked hands. A football jersey. The swish of a cheerleading skirt.

ALEX (V.O.)
Oh please. Not like that.

The sporty pair passes a group of DELINQUENTS smoking in the hall. A YOUNG NEIL hands YOUNG ALEX a tiny BAGGIE.

ALEX (V.O.)
Neil was my pot dealer, and I thought he was ... amazing. He took me on our first date the day I got the one and only B of my life.

INT. MALL - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Young Alex and Neil hand cards to a BOUNCER.

ALEX (V.O.)
We snuck into a pool hall and played for hours. We've been together ever since.

BACK TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Alex stares softly at Neil.

ALEX
Sorry, babe. I'm going to wipe the floor with you.

NEIL
Not this week. Costume points.

He points to the EMBROIDERY on his pocket: "Sergeant Smartie."
Alex laughs.

ALEX
So I take it work was busy?

NEIL
It's advertising. There's always time for a costume. And how was work for you?

ALEX
Worst day ever.

NEIL
Want to talk about it?

ALEX
Not even a little.

MC (O.S.)
Round one: the monsters of *Dr. Who!*

Neil throws his arms up. And Alex deflates.

ALEX
I so need a drink.

NEIL
Uh-uh, babe. Ovulation Genie says
your window's open.

He opens up a pink FERTILITY APP on his PHONE.

ALEX
I thought *I* was the woman in this
relationship?

NEIL
The pink is very dudely.

He catches her eye and gets sincere for a moment.

NEIL (CONT'D)
(leaning in)
Just think: you could be pregnant
right now.

ALEX
(winking)
Or we could conceive later tonight.

They lock hands across the table. A loving moment, bathed in
neon light.

MC (O.S.)
Question 1: What happens when a
Weeping Angel touches you?

Neil mouths the word 'boom' and scribbles down his answer.
Alex drops her head to the table.

CUT TO:

INT. BLOOMS' CAR - NIGHT

Neil drives, annoyed. Alex grins in the passenger seat.

NEIL
Doubles round on anatomy? Did you
bribe the trivia master?

ALEX
It's called: skills.

NEIL
It's called: luck.

They pull into the driveway of a Lincoln Park townhouse.

ALEX

It's called: getting lucky?

She leans over, and kisses him. He tries to resist, but kisses her back. The passion builds.

EXT. BLOOMS' TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Neil and Alex run inside, laughing.

INT. BLOOMS' FOYER - NIGHT

Alex flicks a SWITCH, flooding their apartment in light. Neil is on her instantly. As they make out, clothes come off.

And against the door, they have the kind of sex you'd expect from two people who'd just locked themselves in bar bathroom rather than a couple that's been together for two decades.

INT. BLOOMS' BEDROOM - DAY

Alex wakes up in the morning, her face on Neil's chest. She sniffs his armpit. And gets up.

As she crosses the room, Neil's eyes open.

NEIL

Slay 'em with kindness, babe.

ALEX

(not believing it)
Consider them ... slone.

EXT. FERTILE GROUND - DAY

Alex takes a deep breath, summoning the courage to go inside. She presses through the doors.

INT. RECEPTION - DAY

She moves quickly, hoping no one sees her.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

At her office door, she looks at her CHARTS for the morning. Tilts her head back, pained.

INT. EXAM ROOM 3 – DAY

Mark Thompson sits on an exam table in a GOWN. Alex enters, with a big fake smile.

ALEX
(channeling Rachel)
Good morning, Mark!

MARK
(surprised at the warmth)
Hi, Dr. Bloom.

ALEX
Today is gonna be ... great. (beat)
I sent your sperm sample off to
test for chromosomal fragmentation.
While we wait, our staff urologist
is going to examine you for
external factors. Occasionally, the
problem is something as easy to
treat as an enlarged vein.

MARK
Are you *sure* it wasn't the hot tub?
I searched last night, and-

ALEX
Hot tubs *temporarily* affect sperm.
You said this was years ago.

MARK
It was *really* hot. Like scalding.

Alex wants to roll her eyes, but stops herself.

ALEX
I'll do more research.

A knock and the door opens. Nigel appears. He ignores Alex.

NIGEL
Mark, I am Dr. Shahidi. I'll be
examining you today.

Alex fights her instinct to glower. She turns to Mark, amps the positivity way up.

ALEX
You are in *incredible* hands.
Dr. Shahidi loves peen.

Alex pats Mark on the back awkwardly. And she's out.

INT. DR. BLOOM'S OFFICE – A FEW MINUTES LATER

Alex sits at her desk, reorganizing her beloved highlighters. Nigel sticks his head in.

NIGEL

No infection. No varicocele. And if you ever insult me in front of a patient again, I *will* finish you.

He ducks back out. And Alex chucks a highlighter at the door. In mid-air, it DISSOLVES into...

INT. EXAM ROOM 2 – DAY

... an ULTRASOUND WAND. One that Simon is holding to Emma Fowler's belly.

EMMA

Can you see them?

Simon keeps a poker face.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Please say they look good. Please.

SIMON

Your cells look well-developed. Better than I expected. And I spoke with your oncologist – she agrees mild hormones will be fine.

Simon puts the wand down and takes off his gloves.

SIMON (CONT'D)

I believe this is an experiment worth trying.

EMMA

Really?! Oh my god! Thank you!

She jumps up and hugs him. Simon's surprised at first, but warms to it. Emma reminds him of someone. Maybe Alex?

INT. HALLWAY – DAY

Emma walks, on cloud nine. Simon and Sarah Fowler follow.

SIMON

You're doing a brave thing. A lot of parents would say 'no.'

SARAH

I *laughed* when she said she had cancer – I thought she reading too much WebMD. So this time, I needed to listen.

SIMON

Yes. Listening is good.

EXT. FERTILE GROUND – DAY

As Emma and Sarah exit, a MERCEDES G-CLASS SUV pulls up. Behind the wheel: Nigel's parents, Iranian immigrants by way of Dallas. NASIR SHAHIDI (58) rocks a luxe COWBOY HAT. ZAHRA SHAHIDI (55), a bejeweled HIJAB.

INT. RECEPTION – DAY

The two enter and look around, impressed. Zahra takes a pair of SURGICAL MASKS out of her LOUIS VUITTON BAG. On they go.

ZAHRA

Beautiful. Same colors as the country club.

They stride to the desk. Nasir dings a SERVICE BELL, and a RECEPTIONIST appears.

NASIR

I am here to see my son. The doctor who signs your paycheck.

The receptionist looks at him like he's nuts. But across the desk, Rachel glances up from a CHART. She gets it.

RACHEL

You must be the Shadidis! I am Dr. Rachel Gemini. It is such an honor to have you in the office.

She scoots them to the BREAKFAST BUFFET in the waiting room, and slips a plate in each of their hands.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

You must be very hungry.

ZAHRA

Lemon poppy seed muffins! I make those.

Rachel plops one on her plate. And the Shahidis watch amazed as this beautiful doctor pours them coffee.

RACHEL
 (walking backwards)
 Have a seat. I'll get Nigel.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Rachel speed-walks to Nigel's office. She knocks on his DOOR.
 No answer. She opens it slowly.

Over her shoulder, we see the office *is* tiny and depressing --
 a closet with two Ikea desks and a shelf of SIGNED BASEBALLS.

Nigel enters the frame.

NIGEL
 Hey.

RACHEL
 (turning)
 Hey.

They stand a little too close. Intensity to the eye contact.

RACHEL.
 I, uh, think your parents are here?

INT. DR. SHAHIDI'S OFFICE - DAY

Nigel pulls Rachel inside.

NIGEL
 Here? Like, *here* here?

RACHEL
 I'm pretty sure I just gave your
 mom a muffin.

NIGEL
 Shit! I told them they couldn't
 visit. They think...
 (whispers)
 ... they think this is *my* practice.

RACHEL
 Yeah, they sorta implied that.

NIGEL
 Crap. Why did I lie to them?

RACHEL
 Cause you are fallible, like
 everyone else.

Nigel squirms. Not what he would like her to think. She leans on the desk beside him, shoulder-to-shoulder.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

The way I see it, you can focus on the past. Or you can focus on the present. So what do we do?

Nigel arches an eyebrow - 'we?'

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Mark Thompson sits. There's a WHIRL of activity around him, but he doesn't notice. He's in his own world, staring ahead.

REVEAL: Nasir and Zahra are in the chairs across from him. As Zahra gets up, Nasir studies him.

NASIR

You look troubled, young man.

It takes Mark a second to realize Nasir is talking to him. The hat, the mask -- it's surreal. But when in need...

MARK

Yeah.

Nasir motions for him to keep talking.

MARK (CONT'D)

My wife and I have been trying to get pregnant. And ... they think the problem is ... me.

NASIR

(taking mask off)

There's no blame in these things. Just the way things are.

MARK

No, but it's *me*. (beat) I always thought having kids was, like, a *choice*. That when Missy and I chose it, that'd be it.

NASIR

Sometimes God's plan isn't direct, Point A to Point B. Sometimes it's a little crooked. You know?

MARK

I guess so.

NASIR

My wife and I lived a good life in Iran. When the Revolution started, we fled to United States. My wife was pregnant, and we had nothing – we were so scared our son wouldn't get an education, wouldn't have opportunity. But now, he's a doctor. 3.98 GPA at Johns Hopkins. His own beautiful clinic. (beat) He will help you.

Mark doesn't understand. But talking sure feels good.

MARK

The doctors say there's one thing that would help. But we're not sure it's worth it, for a chance.

NASIR

And you want to be a father?

MARK

Yes!

NASIR

Well, then. You try *everything*.

A light bulb seems to go off in Mark's mind.

MARK

Will you excuse me?

Mark flies out of his seat. And Nasir grins, seeing Zahra returning.

NASIR

Changing lives. The Shahidi way!

Zahra makes a face. Just as Rachel approaches.

RACHEL

Nigel is so sorry, but he's in surgery all day. But he's cleared his schedule tomorrow. Want to come back then?

ZAHRA

Do we need...

Zahra points to her mask. Rachel isn't sure why they're wearing them, but pulls her own from her pocket. She nods, excitedly.

INT. HALLWAY – DAY

Nigel pokes his head around the corner and watches Rachel ushering his parents out. Alex sneaks up behind him.

ALEX
Cause life is—
(video game voice)
Mor-tal Kom-bat!

Nigel jumps and turns around. Very confused.

ALEX (CONT'D)
You said you'd finish me? Like in
the game.

Nigel glares at her and walks off, shaking his head. Alex continues on her way too. And we move with her into another
HYPER SPEED MONTAGE.

A) INT. EXAM ROOM 3 – DAY – As Alex pops in and out, she gives an ultrasound. Makes a pair of MEDICAL MODELS have sex, to illustrate a point to two PATIENTS.

B) INT. OPERATING THEATER – DAY – Alex sits on a stool, SURGICAL MASK on. CLOSE on her goosebumps as she does an embryo transfer.

C) INT. HALLWAY – DAY. On repeat, Alex walks to her office door and grabs a CHART.

We END HYPER SPEED as Nurse Nia approaches. She hands Alex a \$5 BILL. Alex doesn't know why.

NIA
The Thompsons. They're doing IVF.

Alex does a victory dance.

INT. WAITING ROOM – DAY

Alex huddles with Mark and Missy, going over FORMS.

ALEX
Let's put you on Cycle B. There will
be a prep class to explain the
process – then you start on Thursday.

Mark looks hopeful. He puts an arm around Missy.

MISSY
(glowing)
We're ready.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Over Alex's shoulder, we see Mark and Missy in reception, holding each other. Alex walks away, satisfied.

ALEX (V.O.)

Okay, fine. Patients *usually* drive me nuts. But when they make the right decision? That feels good.

INT. DR. BLOOM'S OFFICE - EVENING

Alex sits, finishing her CHARTS. Landon appears. He's pale. And shaking.

LANDON

Dr. Bloom, there's ... there's an error in the Thompson sperm analysis. His sperm count isn't 3 million. (beat) It's 3.

Alex tries to process this.

ALEX

What do you mean 'three?'

LANDON

As in 1 ... 2 ...

He doesn't finish the thought. Alex slams her chart down.

ALEX

What the *fuck*, Landon?

LANDON

I am very sorry, Dr. Bloom.

ALEX

That changes their case entirely! How the *hell* did this happen?

LANDON

One of the lab techs must have... misread my handwriting? I wrote 3. But they input 3 million in the system. It *is* more in line with his counts from the other clinic.

ALEX

Damn it.

INT. LAB - DAY

The door swings open. In comes Alex -- piping mad. She jumps on a CHAIR by the WHITE BOARD, Landon a few paces behind her.

ALEX
Listen up, Petri People!

All eyes turn to her. She takes a HIGHLIGHTER out of her pocket. Draws the number 3 on the board.

ALEX (CONT'D)
This is the number 3. I assumed you learned it on *Sesame Street*, but maybe not? 3 is *very different* from 3 million.

She scrawls "3,000,000." Underlines it.

ALEX (CONT'D)
This number is a challenge.

She furiously circles 3.

ALEX (CONT'D)
This number is a stopper. And because you idiots couldn't tell the difference, I gave my patients the wrong treatment plan. (beat) Never, ever make a mistake like this again!

The LAB TECHS and EMBRYOLOGISTS look traumatized as Alex hops down. She crosses to exit, ranting to herself.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Millions of dollars in equipment, and they screw up because of *bad handwriting*?

Landon licks his finger. He tries to wipe the highlighter off the board. That'll be permanent.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

In the hall, on her own, Alex stops walking and looks up.

ALEX
Fuck times ... three!

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. DR. BLOOM'S OFFICE - DAY

Alex sits, head in hands. She's barely slept -- the lab error has thrown her. She flips through the Thompson's FILE. But it doesn't make any sense.

She sees Nigel walk by her open door.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Alex rushes after him.

ALEX
Dr. Shahidi!

Nigel pauses.

NIGEL
Dr. Bloom.

ALEX
I ...
(struggling to say it)
I ... could really use your help.

Nigel's ears perk up. He certainly wasn't expecting that.

INT. NURSES' STATION - DAY

Alex and Nigel hover over Mark Thompson's chart.

ALEX
His sperm count was in the low
millions, for a year of samples.
Why the sudden drop?

Nigel thinks.

NIGEL
STI?

ALEX
No, I checked. He's clean.

NIGEL
Anabolic steroids?

ALEX
Not in his blood work.

NIGEL
Exposure to pesticides?

ALEX
Probably not in Chicago. (beat)
He's convinced it's because he fell
asleep in a hot tub years ago?

NIGEL
The research is pretty conclusive.
Hot tubs have a-

ALEX
-a temporary effect. That's what I
said.

Nigel crunches the gel in his hair.

NIGEL
He isn't obese. But maybe he's had
a weight change?

Alex gets excited. She flips through the chart.

ALEX
180. 180.

NIGEL
Could he be a secret smoker?

ALEX
No, that'd be *my* husband. I can
smell it a mile away. (beat) What
am I missing?

NIGEL
You've covered the bases. I'm not
sure what else to suggest. Just
tell them nicely. Let them know
there are options. It'll go ...

He looks at Alex, and grits his teeth.

NIGEL (CONT'D)
...fine.

ALEX
Yeah. Thanks.

As she walks away...

ALEX (V.O.)
This outta be fun.

CUT TO:

INT. DR. BLOOM'S OFFICE - DAY

The Thompsons sit on the couch -- Mark's mouth agape, Missy's eyes smoldering with rage.

MISSY
Are you *fucking* kidding me?

MARK
Honey--

MISSY
She said our last clinic was shit.
They didn't do anything like this!

Alex shifts uncomfortably.

ALEX
I know it's a shock, but I want to stress: it doesn't mean IVF won't work. It just means there's less room for error. On retrieval day, I expect about 11 live sperm cells. I'll analyze them, find the ones with best morphology, then implant those directly into your eggs. It's called ICSI.

MISSY
It's called 'bite me.'

Alex nods and takes it. She turns to Mark, who's cupped his hands around his neck.

ALEX
Mark, at the other clinic, did you happen to have any samples frozen?

He shakes his head 'no.' Alex nods -- that would be too easy. She knows what she has to say next may break the camel's back.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Then I would recommend you select a ... sperm ... donor. Just in case.

MISSY
A *sperm* donor?!

ALEX
Yes. I think it'd be wise to have someone else's ... sperm on hand on retrieval day. In case Mark's count drops again. To zero.

Missy flies off the couch.

MARK
 (pulling her back)
 Honey, she's saying just in case.

ALEX
 Exactly. It's a contingency plan.

MISSY
 (to Mark)
 I don't want to do this if it's
 someone else's baby!

ALEX
 If it comes to using a sperm donor,
 it's still very much your baby—

MISSY
 Not *our* baby!

She motions to herself and Mark, then explodes in tears. She sits, trying to calm herself. But her words have triggered a realization for Mark.

MARK
 Oh my god. It wouldn't be *my* baby.

Alex looks at Missy fighting to stay calm. At Mark, silently freaking. This is her chance.

ALEX (V.O.)
 Come on, Alex. Warm and kind!

Alex stands and approaches her patients.

ALEX
 (to Mark)
 I will do everything possible to
 use your sperm cells.

She turns to Missy, and places a hand on her shoulder. Gawkily -- but a step in the right direction.

ALEX (CONT'D)
 There's a very good chance I can —
 especially if I figure out what
 caused this drop.

The Thompsons calm for a moment. There's silence in the room. It's interrupted by a knock.

NURSE NIA
 Dr. Bloom, you're needed for an
 embryo transfer. Now.

Alex looks confused.

ALEX (V.O.)
Crap. How can it be time already?

She pulls out her PHONE. A NOTIFICATION reveals she was supposed to be in the Operating Theater 10 minutes ago.

ALEX (V.O.)
Warm and kind ... way inefficient!

Alex nods at Nia. Then turns to Mark and Missy. They seem like they're in a decent place now. *Mission accomplished?*

ALEX
Alright, well, I'm glad you are feeling better. Stop by reception on your way out and talk to Betty. She's got binders full of ... men. She can help with donor selection.

MISSY
What?! You can't leave!

ALEX
I am unfortunately out of time for today. But would be happy to make an appointment with you tomorrow.

MISSY
We start our cycle tomorrow!

ALEX
Right. Yes.

Alex looks out the door. She sees beefy MALE NURSE CRAIG MCLEAN (27) walking. She rushes out, grabs him by the biceps, and brings him in.

ALEX (CONT'D)
This is Nurse Craig. He's one of our most ... capable employees. He can answer questions.

MISSY
We have questions for you!

ALEX
I need to go. The timing on embryo transfers is very delicate.

MISSY
Are you *kicking us out*?

ALEX
Noooo. Stay. But I ...

She scoots out without finishing her sentence. Missy and Mark stare at Craig. He smiles awkwardly.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

As Alex scurries off, she passes Rachel and Nigel at the door to Dr. Turner's office. They act normal. But with Alex gone, Rachel switches the NAMEPLATE.

The two sneak inside. Nigel takes Simon's DEGREE off the wall, and replaces it with his own.

NIGEL

Thanks, Rachel. I couldn't pull this off without you.

She half smiles as she watches him pluck a FAMILY PHOTO off Simon's desk and fill the space with one of his BASEBALLS.

RACHEL

It's nothing. Dr. Turner has a block of appointments, and everyone knows to keep him away. But can I just say: your parents seem kinda great. You sure you don't want to just come clean?

NIGEL

No way. They were ... so proud of me in med school. I feel like I haven't done much since.

RACHEL

That's not true. You made partner. And you help your patients.

NIGEL

Yeah, but no one respects me. Everyone's all, "Dr. Bloom. Dr. Bloom." She's the hero. I'm the dick dude.

RACHEL

Yeah, and I'm the cake lady.

Nigel laughs. He pulls out his phone -- a TEXT.

NIGEL

They're here. You ready?

Rachel shakes her head, just a little unsure.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Rachel and Nigel lead the Shahidis on an office tour. They point to rooms, posturing like Nigel is king of the castle.

Nasir walks with his fingers in his belt loops. Zahra gives a Miss America wave. The NURSES they pass play along.

The group reaches Dr. Turner's office. Nigel leads Nasir and Zahra inside. Rachel stands guard outside.

INT. DR. TURNER'S OFFICE - DAY

Nigel motions for his parents to sit in Simon's armchairs. Meanwhile, he walks around the desk.

NIGEL

This is where the magic happens.

He hesitates before taking a seat in Simon's CHAIR. Then notes how cushy it feels. How grand this vantage feels.

NASIR

My son with his own practice at 38!

ZAHRA

And a real mahogany desk!

NASIR

American dream!

Nasir pounds the desk with his fist. Something falls off. He bends and picks up a BUSINESS CARD off the floor.

NASIR (CONT'D)

Who's Dr. Turner?

Nigel smiles tightly.

INT. EXAM ROOM 3 - DAY

Simon enters. He sees Emma Fowler standing by her mom. Her ROBE is untouched on the exam table. Her eyes are red.

SIMON

Do you need more time to change?

EMMA

(shaking head)

I'm not doing it.

SIMON

We need to do this injection to keep pace for your retrieval.

EMMA

I'm not doing the retrieval!

Simon looks at Sarah, who's despondent. Then back to Emma.

SIMON

But you were so certain, Emma.
Changing course is a big decision.
Let's think it through.

EMMA

I've thought it through, and it
doesn't matter.

Sarah wipes away a tear.

SARAH

Emma's friend from the oncology
ward passed away yesterday.

EMMA

Her name was Kaitlyn. And I'm going
to die too!

The force of Emma's words punch Simon in the gut. He doesn't know what to say. A quiet hangs in the room.

He steps forward slowly. He hunches down to Emma's eye level. She avoids his gaze.

SIMON

Emma, you are not going to die. You
have TED Talks to give, no?

Emma doesn't respond. So Simon keeps trying.

SIMON (CONT'D)

I know this loss is devastating. But
I also know that it takes so much
gumption to walk into an office like
this and convince someone like me to
do this procedure. I can't wait for
the day you return, and I get to see
the woman you've become.

Emma looks at him skeptically. Then to her mom.

EMMA

Can we go now?

Sarah flicks up the corners of her mouth at her daughter. As they leave, she makes eye contact with Simon.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Simon leaves the exam room, visibly shaken. He takes a moment, then begins to walk.

As he rounds a corner, Rachel pops into view. She swoops in to divert him.

RACHEL

Dr. Turner – best boss ever. Let's get a coffee to celebrate the day being ... 2/3 over!

SIMON

I need a few minutes alone.

Rachel blocks his way.

RACHEL

An almond latte will help. Let's–

SIMON

No, Dr. Gemini. I...

Before Rachel knows it, Simon is at his door, and confused to see Nigel's nameplate.

INT. DR. TURNER'S OFFICE – DAY

Simon sees Nigel at his desk. As his glasses come off, Rachel scrambles to normalize.

RACHEL

Dr. Turner, meet Nigel's parents! They're in from Dallas, and wanted to see every nook of the office.

The Shahidis put together what's going on. Faces flash with disappointment, they look at Nigel. His posture shrinks.

SIMON

Apologies to all, but it has been a very trying 48 hours. So can everyone, please, leave my office.

When no one moves, Simon begins to fume.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Out!

Nigel and Rachel rush the Shahidis out. Simon slams the door behind them.

INT. SWANK LAW OFFICE – DAY

Missy sits at a COMPUTER, staring straight ahead. The PHONE rings, but she doesn't hear it. A CO-WORKER enters.

CO-WORKER
Missy? Are you okay?

Missy nods 'yes.' Then explodes in tears.

From behind the co-worker's head, we see Missy telling the full story. We can't hear her words, but we see her emotion.

MISSY
We need a sperm donor, and Mark is devastated.
(confessional)
I don't think we're gonna make it.

CO-WORKER
Sounds like grounds for a lawsuit.

A *lawsuit*. The words make Missy feel something new -- in control. She nods sharply.

INT. SWANK KITCHEN - DAY

Mark stands behind a STOVE. Chefs swirl around him with POTS and PANS. He's still, eyes on the horizon.

LINE CHEF
Do you have a minute, chef?

From behind the line cook's head, we see Mark's expression as he hears...

LINE CHEF (CONT'D)
She's pregnant. Again. Whoops.

Mark shakes his head. *Why does this clown get to procreate?*

MARK
Have you heard of condoms?

LINE CHEF
Yeah, of course, but it doesn't feel as good. Can I get bumped up a station? I really need the money.

Mark's nostrils flare. Before he can check his anger, he reaches for a PAN -- and hurls it.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

And we're back with Alex, moving down the hall. Things speed up into a HYPERSPEED MONTAGE.

A) INT. EXAM ROOM 1 – DAY – Alex pops in and out. She presses on a WOMAN's belly. Uses highlighters to demonstrate a cycle.

B) INT. FILE ROOM – DAY – Alex pulses through, handing files to Nurse Nia on repeat.

As the HYPERSPEED ENDS, Dr. Turner pokes his head in.

SIMON
Dr. Bloom, a word.

INT. DR. TURNER'S OFFICE – NIGHT

Alex enters and takes a seat. Simon looks at her strangely. He reaches for something in his desk drawer.

SIMON
I have something to give you.

He slides a FOLDER toward her. Alex opens it. And sees:
"Performance Improvement Plan."

ALEX
Performance improvement plan? What the—

SIMON
Missy Thompson called, threatening a lawsuit. She is furious about the lab mistake – and your handling of her case in general.

ALEX
It's not my fault the lab screwed up!

SIMON
It is, however, your fault that you failed to inform them in a kind way, and that you left them with a nurse to answer questions. The lab opened the door to the lawsuit, but you took its coat.

ALEX
I spent an hour with them! I had to get to an embryo transfer!

SIMON
You could have found another way. Like – oh, I don't know – asking them to stay and coming back?

ALEX

But I had back-to-back app-

SIMON

I will be taking over their case from here.

ALEX

Whoa, whoa, whoa. I have their case under control. I'm doing ICSI, with donor sperm on hand.

SIMON

It isn't your choice. The Thompsons don't want you as their doctor.

Shocked silence.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Whether you realize it or not, the way you act changes the alchemy of this clinic. Your tone has to change. You have 90 days to turn it around. In this folder, you'll find a list of action steps. We'll meet once a week to discuss your progress.

Alex reads. Each point feels like a slap in the face.

ALEX

An "emotional intelligence" class?

SIMON

It will help you learn to imagine yourself in your patients' shoes.

ALEX

I don't need that. And I don't need my patients to fill out review cards. I'm not some kid right out of med school.

SIMON

I wouldn't do this if your attitude hadn't become an issue affecting the caliber of our work.

Alex slams the folder shut.

ALEX

(threatening)

I have made this one of the top clinics in the country.

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

I can walk into any clinic in the city and they'll hire me on the spot.

SIMON

And I would give you a glowing recommendation. With caveats.

We hold on this for a moment.

ALEX

I am not a bad doctor!

SIMON

No, you are a very good one. But you have things you need to learn, like every other doctor out there.

ALEX

I'm not ... a bad person.

SIMON

No one is saying that.

Alex opens her mouth to say more, but no words come out. She shakes her head, rises, and walks out.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Alex is dazed. Confused. Extremely lost.

ALEX

(sad)

Fuck, exponentially.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. BLOOMS' BEDROOM – MORNING

Alex wakes up circa 5am. She looks at Neil, softly snoring. She tries to go back to bed, but her mind is whirring.

ALEX (V.O.)
Who am I kidding?

She rises and starts to put on clothes.

INT. BLOOMS' FOYER – DAY

She scoots out the door, the sun barely over the horizon.

INT. DR. BLOOM'S OFFICE – DAY

Alex scans the MEDICAL JOURNALS on her shelves. She pulls out a few and adds them to a growing PILE on her desk.

She sits down, trusty highlighters lined up. As she marks, the words and numbers FLICKER around her.

ALEX
(reading/highlighting)
"Patients with Type 1 or Type 2
diabetes can become azoospermic."
(reacting)
Nope. Not him.

A few pages later, CLOSE as she highlights: "...problem for elite cyclists."

ALEX (CONT'D)
Probably not. But worth asking.

She checks her PHONE. It's 8:30am.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Come on. You're overlooking
something.

Alex moves her mouse, and wakes up her COMPUTER. She searches her medical journal tab for: "sudden drop in sperm count." As she scans the results, words and numbers FLASH.

ALEX (CONT'D)
(reading)
"The active ingredient in Propecia
correlates to oligozoospermia."

She shakes her head. Bites her lip and thinks. She searches for: "sperm count and heat." Words and stats TUMBLE.

ALEX (CONT'D)

(reading)

"After exposure to a wi-fi laptop,
24% of sperm cells cease swimming."

(reacting)

Scary for society. But he has a
desktop.

She clicks again, discouraged. But then she finds something.

ALEX (CONT'D)

(eyes sparkling)

Nuh! Uh!

INT. DR. TURNER'S OFFICE - DAY

Alex rushes in and finds Simon at his desk, looking at CHARTS.

ALEX

Mark Thompson is a *chef*!

She waves a PRINT-OUT of a STUDY in his face: "The effects of stove heat on fertility." Simon takes it. As he reads, words and numbers FLASH around him too.

SIMON

(reading)

"In a study of 120 men working in
kitchen environments, 33% tested
with below average sperm counts."

ALEX

Prolonged heat exposure over time!
The sample size is minuscule, but
this has to be it.

SIMON

Well, look at you. Listening to
your patients.

Alex holds a PROTECTION APRON she stole from the X-Ray Room.

ALEX

If we have him wear this at work,
his count should improve. He'll
look like an idiot - but an idiot
who can have a baby.

Simon nods.

SIMON

This is very promising.

ALEX
Awesome. When can I tell him?

A beat.

SIMON
I will share this information with the Thompsons. You focus on your performance improvement plan.

ALEX
But you just said I listened!

SIMON
Show me it's a trend.

ALEX
Dr. Turner, this plan isn't necessary! Just let me make things right with the Thompsons.

SIMON
Right with the Thompsons is respecting their wishes.

Alex deflates. She nods, resigned to obey.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

But outside Simon's office door, Alex makes a decision: She can fix this. And she will.

INT. RECEPTION - DAY

Alex approaches MARY CHRISTIAN (55) -- a receptionist with a large collection of holiday sweaters. Today's is Thanksgiving.

ALEX
Mary! My favorite receptionist.
Can you help me with something--

She walks around the desk. And stops short seeing the HARDCORE PORNOGRAPHY playing on Mary's COMPUTER.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Whoa!

They both watch for a moment, transfixed.

MARY
I road test everything for the sample rooms.

ALEX

A skill that must look great on the resumé. (beat) But hey, can you tell me what time the Thompsons are in for monitoring?

MARY

(suspiciously)
Aren't they Dr. Turner's patients?

ALEX

They are. I'd just like to say hello and ... tell them what a great decision they've made.

Alex gives Mary a hopeful thumbs-up. And Mary bites.

MARY

(checking schedule, porn still playing)
They're in at 2:30pm. Exam room 3.
I can page you when they arrive.

ALEX

No need. Thank you.
(walking away)
Love the sweater.

Alex disappears. A moment later, Mary looks up to see the Shahidis. Zahra recoils at the SEX SOUNDS on her computer. Nasir doesn't notice.

NASIR

Which way to Dr. Shahidi's office?

Mary points.

INT. DR. SHAHIDI'S OFFICE – DAY

Nigel is placing his baseballs back on his shelf. He turns around -- and sees his parents.

NASIR

You don't have to be the boss for us to be proud of you.

ZAHRA

It doesn't matter if you have a posh office.
(looking up)
Or one with ceiling tile stains.

Nigel's inner teenager comes out.

NIGEL

Of course it matters. You guys are obsessed with nice things!

NASIR

We didn't have nice things growing up, son.

ZAHRA

Nice things make people see us as more than ... uh-

NASIR

-as more than Muslim. People look at us, and see successful people.
(taking off cowboy hat)
People they can respect.

NIGEL

Guys, that's insane.

ZAHRA

Nigel, it wasn't easy being Iranian in Texas. We worked hard to blend.

NASIR

But you and your sister - you're American. You don't have to think this way. You can be the snowflakes.

Nigel laughs. He's surprised by all this. It softens him.

NIGEL

I'm sorry. I thought you'd be disappointed that I'm just the staff urologist.

NASIR

I do have a penis, son.

ZAHRA

You are a champion for men!

Nigel looks relieved. Pleased, even.

ZAHRA (CONT'D)

What we want to know is: when will you be a champion for a woman? We want grandkids.

Nigel makes a face. He knows his parents after all.

INT. HALL - DAY

As the Shahidis hug Nigel goodbye, Alex passes. And we move into one final HYPERSPEED MONTAGE.

A) INT. EXAM ROOM 1 – DAY – Alex pops in and out. She shows a COUPLE a large NEEDLE. Listens with a stethoscope to a PATIENT's heart.

B) INT. DR BLOOM'S OFFICE – DAY – Alex reorganizes her DESK DRAWER. She marks up one CALENDAR. Then another.

C) INT. FILE ROOM – DAY – Alex hands files to Nurse Nia on repeat.

The HYPERSPEED ENDS as Alex gets an alert on her phone. It's 2:30pm. Show time.

INT. HALLWAY – DAY

Alex knocks quietly on the door of Exam Room 3. Sneaks in.

INT. EXAM ROOM 3 – DAY

Mark and Missy are shocked to see her.

MARK	MISSY
What are you doing here?	You're not our doctor!

ALEX

Dr. Turner will be in shortly. I just wanted to come in and ... apologize. I know I didn't treat you very well. You deserve better.
(off blank look)

I understand how hard it must have been to hear me recommend a sperm donor, especially after the mistake we made. I should have been more sensitive.

MISSY

Yeah, I'm aware.

Alex takes the barb. Determined to make things right.

ALEX

Mark, I found a study. I don't think it was the hot tub. I think it's working in front of a stove. Apparently, a high percentage of chefs have this problem.

MARK

(shocked)
Really?

ALEX

Yeah. I think the right plan is to postpone your egg retrieval by a few months. Missy, we can spend that time getting your endometrial lining as healthy as possible. Every month, we'll freeze a sperm sample from Mark, to keep building a bank of healthy cells. And Mark, if you start wearing a heat shield, I suspect your sperm production will recover. Pretty quickly.

Missy and Mark look at each other. That sounds good.

MARK

But what if it *is* genetic? What if it *is* me?

Mark looks at his feet. Alex sees for the first time how deeply this has affected him. She feels ... empathy?

ALEX

(blurting out)
George Washington!

MISSY/MARK

Huh?

ALEX

George Washington was infertile. He was the father of our country – but he couldn't have children.

MARK

Really?

ALEX

(nodding)
He had tuberculosis when he was young, which can cause infertility. He adopted Martha's kids from her first marriage, but he felt a lot of sadness about not having his own. (beat) Seriously, other people have been through this.

Mark turns this information over. It's like a weight lifting.

MARK

(brightening)
So ... I'm like George Washington?

MISSY

Only without the wig.

MARK
And the slaves!

MISSY
And the being dead!

Missy and Mark are both smiling. The banter feels good. Alex seizes on their good vibes.

ALEX
Look, I know infertility is hard.
You want this one thing so badly,
and it's just out of your control.
But science – it's here for you.

Mark and Missy look at each other, sweetly. Missy tear ups. Mark comforts her.

CLOSE on the door as it opens.

Simon enters and comes eye-to-eye with Alex. He whips his glasses off. Gives her the harshest look imaginable.

Then he sees Mark and Missy. Registers that they look happy. He's surprised. *What's going on here?*

MARK
Dr. Turner, we appreciate you
taking our case. But we'd like Dr.
Bloom to be our doctor too.

Missy squeezes Mark's hand.

MISSY
I'm not filing the lawsuit. I just
wanted to ... feel heard.

Simon nods. He isn't about to protest.

SIMON
Okay, then.
(loaded pause)
Let's start your monitoring?

And the two doctors get to work -- together. Alex preps an ULTRASOUND WAND and hands it off to Simon. As she watches him work, she has a moment.

ALEX (V.O.)
What do you know? I guess warm
fuzzies aren't so bad.

As Simon moves the wand, Missy looks up at Alex. She smiles. Big. With trust.

Alex places a reassuring hand on her shoulder. As seamlessly as Simon did it.

ALEX (V.O.)
Things patients do that are
actually pretty cool: Admit when
their doctor is brilliant.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Alex pops out of the door. She rushes off-screen, and returns with the HEAT PROTECTION APRON.

And as she leaves for real, she begins to move in SLOW MOTION. Pleased. Happy. On her way to change.

INT. FILE ROOM - DAY

Alex hands the Thompsons' CHART to Nurse Nia. Alex puts out her hand. Nia gives her \$10 this time.

ALEX (V.O.)
The first baby conceived via IVF
was born in 1978. Since then, some
10 million babies have come into
the world because of it. A good
number of them thanks to me.

INT. SAMPLE ROOM - DAY

Mary Christian fans out the magazines. Admires her work.

ALEX (V.O.)
Fertility medicine exists because
doctors weren't satisfied by the
limits of nature.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Mark Thompson walks with Nurse Jasmine -- only this time, alongside her. He's comfortable. Proud.

ALEX (V.O.)
It advances so quickly because we
take all we know about biology and
we try things - sometimes crazy
things - to nudge it along.

INT. NURSES' STATION - DAY

Simon feels a tap on his shoulder. He turns, and thinks no one's there. Until he looks down ... and sees Emma Fowler.

Emma talks in her fast-paced way -- we can't hear what she's saying, but she looks like she's had a change of heart. She throws her arms around Simon. He hugs her back.

ALEX (V.O.)

IVF sucks. I wish it on no one.

INT. EXAM ROOM 3 - DAY

Emma purses her lips as she watches Simon preps a needle. But ... she's ready this time. She's making a bet on her future. Determination face goes on.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Nigel and his parents laugh as they eat deep dish PIZZA.

ALEX (V.O.)

But at the end of the day, patients
upend their lives because it's
about ... family.

INT. KID'S BOUTIQUE - DAY

Neil holds a tiny pair of DOC MARTENS. Gazes wistfully.

ALEX (V.O.)

It's about your future, and all you
imagined it might be.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Alex is still lost in her thoughts, with a smile on her face. The SLOW MOTION ends as Nurse Craig passes.

NURSE CRAIG

Dr. Gemini's looking for you.

ALEX

I'll find her in a bit.

NURSE CRAIG

She said it's urgent. She needs you
in the break room. Stat!

Alex grits her teeth and makes a u-turn.

INT. HALL OUTSIDE BREAK ROOM – DAY

Alex pauses, psyching herself up. She closes her eyes. And walks through the door.

INT. BREAK ROOM – DAY

The Fertile Ground staff stands before her, singing in that sad way people in offices do. Rachel conducts with her arms.

Alex is confused. It's not her birthday. She strains to hear what the group is singing.

FERTILE GROUND STAFF
(slow, off-key)
Happy *half* birthday to you. Happy
half birthday to you.

Rachel orients her toward a CAKE. In blue frosting: "Happy 35 1/2 birthday."

ALEX
(laughing)
A half birthday is not a thing.
Why celebrate six months since ...
a person's ...

Alex's smile fades as she begins to do the mental math.

ALEX (V.O.)
No...

She looks at her co-workers singing. Their words SLOW DOWN. They start to sound almost DEMENTED.

FERTILE GROUND STAFF
(super slow, exaggerated)
Happy *half* birthday to you.

Alex's eyes go wide.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. BLOOMS' BEDROOM – FLASHBACK – NIGHT

Alex and Neil roll around naked in bed.

NEIL
I've got a birthday present for
you, Mrs. Bloom.

Alex laughs. They kiss passionately.

INT. BLOOMS' BATHROOM – FLASHBACK – DAY

Alex looks at a pregnancy test. It reads: "Not pregnant."

EXT. FOREST – FLASHBACK – NIGHT

A car horn beeps on repeat. Inside, Alex and Neil have sex in the driver's seat, Alex's elbow against the wheel.

INT. BLOOMS' BATHROOM – FLASHBACK – DAY

Alex looks at another pregnancy test. "Not pregnant."

END MONTAGE.

INT. BREAK ROOM – DAY

Alex is slapped with a realization. She looks to Rachel, who's smiling maniacally as she lifts the cake.

Alex's vision glitches. Her flashbacks start to cycle quickly:

FLASH! – INT. BLOOMS' LIVING ROOM – NIGHT
Alex and Neil have sex in a chair.

FLASH! – INT. BLOOMS' BATHROOM – DAY
Alex looks at a pregnancy test. "Not pregnant."

FLASH! – INT. BLOOMS' LIVING ROOM – NIGHT
Alex pulls an unenthused Neil up the stairs.

FLASH! – INT. BLOOMS' BATHROOM – DAY
Alex looks at a pregnancy test. "Not pregnant."

FLASH! – INT. BLOOMS' BEDROOM – NIGHT
Neil pulls an unenthused Alex through the door.

FLASH! – INT. BLOOMS' BATHROOM – DAY
Alex looks at a pregnancy test. "Not pregnant."

And we're BACK TO THE BREAK ROOM. The singing seems louder. More sinister. Alex is struggling.

All eyes stay on her as she begins to back out of the room.

ALEX
Sorry. I ... I have to–

INT. HALLWAY – DAY

Alex sprints.

INT. DR. BLOOM'S OFFICE - DAY

Safely inside, Alex lifts her PHONE and opens her Ovulation Genie APP. She examines it, very confused.

Annoyed, she pulls a CALENDAR from her desk drawer. And for the first time, she creates one for herself.

She CIRCLES days in mid June, July, August, September and October. Her chest rises and collapses as she circles days in mid-November. The last dates match her DESK CALENDAR exactly.

Alex counts the circles.

ALEX (V.O.)
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. ... 6?

She looks up stunned.

INT. SUPPLY CLOSET - DAY

Alex climbs a shelf and reaches into box of PREGNANCY TESTS.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Test in hand, Alex bursts in and rushes to a stall. Inside, she drops her pants. Rips open the WRAPPER. Places the fateful STICK between her legs.

She lies the test flat on a SHELF. Closes her eyes and says what looks almost like a prayer.

The next two minutes seem to last forever. Alex paces. Sits on the floor. Steadies herself against the sink.

Finally, the TIMER goes off. She rushes to the stall. Picks up the test slowly...

CLOSE ON the test window. It shows: a MIDDLE FINGER along with the words, "You crossed the six-month line!"

Alex gasps for breath. She's having a full-on panic attack. In a single moment, her life has spun fully out of control.

We go wide on the bathroom. In Alex's stall, we see her feet STOMP. We hear a muffled SCREAM. And as the metal walls begin to SHAKE...

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF PILOT