

RENEE naps in the rear, earphones in, next to a dissected outline for Truthsayers: The Case of the PLACEHOLDER, marked with notes like "doesn't work," "makes no sense," and "need to set up this payoff."

CRYSTAL (V.O.)

Yeah, we could not fulfill this mission without a lot of help. You have no idea what goes into it all. You know, Cole and I are based in Fort Worth, Texas, but we have a whole remote team scattered across the entire country.

RENEE is startled when MOM & DAD return with groceries.

SOUND: Switch to hearing the world.

Start

MOM

Well if we say "Move back to Colorado," she's going to say "Don't try to fix me." But if we tell her to just stay put, she's going to say "You don't want to be around me."

DAD

Except that we drove all the way here for Thanksgiving, which says "We obviously want to be around you."

MOM

Thanksgiving is an obligation. She's not going to interpret it as a gesture of kindness.

DAD

Well then how about we say, "Hey Lina, we're not trying to fix you, but we'd like you to be close to us."

MOM

No, no, she'll totally misinterpret that.

DAD

How is that possible?

They close the hatchback. RENEE gets a call.

Hey Cole.

RENEE mouths, "I know."

COLE (V.O.) (cont'd)
 but our concern is, we just don't
 want to create any brand confusion,
 right? So, we're probably not ready
 to put you in an author position, per
 se, but we've bounced around a couple
 other avenues. What if you were to be
 a ghostwriter for us?

RENEE
 Um... you mean--

COLE (V.O.)
 You know, we kind of set the
 course, tell you what we
 want,

MOM
 Are you asking for a raise?

RENEE shakes her head.

COLE (V.O.)
 you learn to sort of write in our
 voice,

COLE (V.O.)
 then basically you take it
 from there and just run it
 by us for approval. What
 about that?

MOM
 You should ask for a raise.
 (to DAD)
 Don't you think she should
 ask for a raise?

DAD
 It's a non-profit.

RENEE
 Um, well, yeah, I mean,

MOM
 They're bestselling authors.

RENEE
 we could try that.

COLE (V.O.)
 Great. I think that'll be great. And
 here's another idea that, um-- Tell
 you what, let me find Crystal and
 make sure she's okay with me pitching
 this to you. One sec.

RENEE mutes her phone.

RENEE
 Hey, can you drive slower?

DAD
 What?

RENEE

I just need you to buy me some time--

MOM

Why do you have a work call today?

RENEE

It wasn't planned--

MOM

Why would you even answer
the phone?

RENEE

I'm sorry--

MOM

Lina's already going to be a basket
case. We don't need to make it worse
by showing up late--

RENEE

It's been 3 weeks, plus the guy was a
selfish jerk, so she's probably
calmed down a bit--

DAD

Didn't she say she's been doing a
bunch of work around the house?

MOM

It's Lina. What kind of work would
she be doing around a house?

9 INT. LINA'S HOUSE - DAY 9

LINA finds the desired record and places it on the platter.
The label on the record says:

The First Trimester

A note sits on a table, which begins, "Lina, I'm sorry I
couldn't go on living anymore."

LINA lowers the tonearm, and the record launches into the
intro to a big band version of Silent Night. LINA walks to
the note, almost dancing to the music. As the band ramps up
to the end of its intro, she crumples and throws the note.

10 EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - DAY 10

MONTAGE BEGINS. LINA wanders alone among a sea of trees,
looking lost. She stops and studies a tree, then turns
around and studies another.

End

DAD switches gears and moves forward slowly again.

CRYSTAL (V.O.)
we'll give him a phone when it's time
for him to talk to you, and we'll
just keep it on speaker; you know,
that way he can't do anything
mischievous, you know what I mean?

RENEE Uh, yeah, okay, that's fine. MOM Ugh, this is ridiculous.

MOM awkwardly disembarks the moving vehicle.

MOM (cont'd)
Happy Thanksgiving!

LINA
Hey Mom.

LINA drops the pie into the garbage can.

13 INT. LINA'S HOUSE LATER

13

They stand inside, taking in the sight. An awkward beat.

MOM
How quaint.

RENEE
Why does it smell like a nuclear
reactor.

LINA
Oh. Y'all didn't happen to pick up
another pie, did you?

CUT TO:

9 Advent candles are on the table. MOM hands LINA a lighter,
then removes an oven mitt. She's sweating.

MOM
Evangeline, would you please do the
honors?

LINA ignites the first candle. DAD reads from a booklet.

DAD
Hell on Earth... this is why Jesus
was conceived, in the virgin Mary.
Emmanuel; God with us... entering
into our darkness.
(MORE)

start

DAD (cont'd)
 (done reading)
 And what better way to celebrate His
 Advent than with a dinner of
 Thanksgiving. Thank you, Mama, for
 your hard work on the food.

MOM
 (quietly)
 They helped.

DAD's look says, "Yeah, not much."

DAD
 Wren, you want to pray for us?

They hold hands. RENEE's prayer is stilted and empty.

RENEE
 Um... dear God... thank you for all
 of your blessings, and for this food.
 Please help us to be thankful. Amen.

DAD
 Amen.

MOM
 Amen.

MOM (cont'd)
 (looks at watch)
 Just a few more minutes in the oven.
 We can unload Renee's things while
 we're waiting.

RENEE
 No. No, I'm sorry. I know you can't
 afford to live here on your own, but
 I can't stay here.

MOM
 What?

LINA
 Why not?

RENEE
 If you don't want to lose the house,
 get one of your friends to live with
 you.

LINA
 You think all my friends are bad
 influences.

LINA
 Besides, even if I--

RENEE
 So what? That was your
 choice.

LINA

I only have one left who hasn't gone off the deep end and isn't with a dude.

RENEE

Well one is all you need.

LINA

You remember the one who came up to y'all at the funeral?

They all react in utter repugnance. DAD chokes on water. LINA is ignoring her escalating nausea.

MOM

Oh mercy.

RENEE

Wha-- Def--

RENEE (cont'd)

Define deep end! What do you think constitutes "the deep end"?!

LINA

Well granted, she's pretty close. Why do you think I'm asking you?!

RENEE

Because you need help with the rent!

LINA

Just give me till Christmas. Mom and Dad can come back and if you're not managing to stay sane, you can go back to living with our parents.

RENEE

Is that supposed to be an insult?

DAD

Why don't you just--

DAD (cont'd)

Why don't you move back to Colorado and stay with us--

LINA

You don't want that. Don't pretend like you want that. You couldn't wait for me to go off to college. So I did, and I've been here ever since. And now, this is my life. This is my h--

The nausea has become overwhelming. LINA vomits onto the table. The others react in shock. MOM rushes to LINA.

MOM
Good gracious! Are you okay?! What's wrong?!

LINA
(dazed; out of breath)
I'm fine. I'm fine. I'm sorry. It's nothing... contagious.
(beat)
This isn't how I was going to tell you, but... you are now grandparents.

With sarcastic positivity, LINA whispers.

LINA (cont'd)
Congratulations.

DAD
I uh... I'll get this cleaned up.

DAD exits. MOM side hugs LINA, then follows. A beat.

RENEE
I'll get my stuff.

RENEE blows out the candle.

End

14 EXT. LINA'S HOUSE - DAY

14

A DRIVER helps DAD put items in his ridesharing car.

DAD
Thanks.
(to RENEE)
Going to miss having you around.

RENEE
It's just a month.

DAD
Going to plan some family holiday season activities?

RENEE
In Texas? Won't even feel like the holidays.

DAD
Well then I guess you'll have to use that vivid imagination of yours.

MOM & LINA approach. DAD goes to hug LINA.