

BABY TEEH

a short screenplay by

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FADE IN:

INT. GYNECOLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY

The GYNECOLOGIST, an older man, crosses his hands on the desk, looking grim.

A YOUNG COUPLE sits across from him. The woman, CANDACE, looks ill. The man, JOEL, is shell-shocked. He looks at his wife anxiously, and takes her hand.

Without returning the look, she brushes his hand aside.

CANDACE

"Barren."

GYNECOLOGIST

We don't use that term. "Infertile" is the preferred--

CANDACE

What's the difference? It means the same, whatever the hell you want to call it.

Concerned, Joel puts a hand on her shoulder.

JOEL

Candace...

She shrugs it off angrily.

CANDACE

Don't dismiss me. It's my body, isn't it?

The Doctor and Joel share an uncomfortable look.

CANDACE (CONT'D)

ISN'T IT?

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joel and Candace lie on opposite sides of the large bed in the dark. Both wide awake. Candace weeps silently.

Joel turns to her.

JOEL

What about *in vitro*?

Candace sniffles, wipes her nose. Doesn't answer.

JOEL (CONT'D)
There are thousands of children
without homes...

CANDACE
I'm not adopting.

Joel SIGHS heavily through his nose. The silence draws out. Finally he shimmies across the wide empty space, spooning up to her. She scowls.

JOEL
We'll do whatever you want. Okay?

He kisses her cheek. Candace begins to soften.

His kisses move down her ear. Her brow furrows as he reaches under the sheet.

JOEL (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. It's just... after what
happened with Hayden, I thought--

Candace thrusts him away angrily.

Rejected, Joel rolls over. Shimmies back across the gulf to his side of the bed.

Frustrated, Candace begins to weep again, as quiet as before.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Just past midnight on the digital clock.

Candace wakes, WINCING IN PAIN. She reaches up to touch her breast under the sheet.

Something wriggles under the sheet at the foot of the bed. THUMP as the DARK SHAPE about the size of a small dog hits the floor.

CANDACE
(whispers)
Joel...? Joel.

Joel's eyes come open in the dark. He mutters sleepily.

JOEL
Mmm?

Candace scowls out into the dark room, unnerved. She looks over her shoulder. Sees the great distance between them.

CANDACE
I think something just bit me.

JOEL
(now he's awake)
Bit you?

CANDACE
I don't know. Maybe it was a dream.
It's really sore, though.

Joel SIGHS angrily through his nose. A beat of silence while Joel goes back to sleep.

Candace rubs her breast under the sheet, wincing again.

Floorboards CREAK. She looks up at the ceiling, nervous.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Candace showers. She's runs the soap under her armpits and over her breasts. She WINCES. Looks down at her right breast.

Dried-off with a towel in her hair, she examines her breast in the mirror. A dark, circular BRUISE. Curious, she gets a closer look in the small vanity.

It looks like TEETH MARKS...

Candace pushes away the vanity and gives herself a worried look in the larger mirror.

INT. SPARE BEDROOM - DAY

Candace sits on the bed wearing boxer shorts and a loose university t-shirt, looking at a PHOTO ALBUM.

PHOTOS of her with a cherubic BOY, in various settings, both of them laughing. In some of them, Joel makes funny faces.

She closes the book and sets it on the dresser beside a Favrile glass vase, and leaves the room.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Candace sits before the computer, a headset on her ears, a DOCTOR'S nasal drone as she TYPES a transcription.

DOCTOR
(on HEADPHONES)
The patient has put on fifteen to twenty pounds in the three months since our last visit. She came to me complaining of morning sickness, and has since begun, strangely, to lactate.

Candace types this. She sips coffee.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

(on HEADPHONES)

It is my medical opinion that the patient suffers from what is called a phantom or hysterical pregnancy.

She types "THIS MAN IS AN ASSHOLE," then deletes it.

She flips to her internet browser: a BREAST CANCER website. "EARLY DETECTION SAVES LIVES," etc.

She flips to another window: happy BABIES, BABY clothes. Idly scrolls through it. Cracks a wistful smile.

CRASH!

She startles, flicks the headphones off her head and spins around on the chair, looking out into the EMPTY HALL.

INT. HALL - MOMENTS LATER

She stands worried by the stairs, looking up.

CANDACE

Hello...?

No response. She breaks into LAUGHTER.

CANDACE (CONT'D)

Get a hold of yourself, girl.

CRASH! THUMP-THUMP-THUMP-THUMP! SMALL FOOTSTEPS scurrying across the floor upstairs.

Candace YELPS, throwing up a hand to her heart. She grimaces at the pain in her breast.

She creeps up the stairs. She sees the MESS through the banisters, the spare room like the bottom of a bird cage with scrap paper. Dismay crosses her features.

CANDACE (CONT'D)

No...

She hurries up the rest of the way.

INT. SPARE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The floor is covered in TORN PHOTOS. MEN and WOMEN and CHILDREN. Mostly the cherubic BOY. There's shards of the broken vase by the dresser.

Standing in the doorway, Candace puts a hand over her mouth. She looks up at the attic SCUTTLE HOLE, the cover askew.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Candace opens a drawer, grabs a FLASHLIGHT. She almost leaves the kitchen when she turns and grabs a KNIFE from the block.

INT. SPARE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

She's standing in the doorway with a look of determination.

She tucks the flashlight into the waistband of her shorts, and crosses the room, careful of the broken colored glass.

Candace looks up at the scuttle hole. She climbs up onto the dresser and reaches for the hatch cover. The tips of her fingers graze it. She balances warily on her tiptoes.

She pushes the hatch cover up and out of the way. PITCH BLACK above. She plucks up the knife from the dresser and tosses it up into the hole.

She's barely able to grasp the sides of the hole, but she manages. GRUNTING with effort, she pulls herself up.

She peers over the lip of the hatch. Pink fiberglass and bare floor joists. A dusty shaft of light from the open hatch, and the VACUUM SOUND of emptiness.

She pulls herself up onto her elbows. Spots the knife. She snatches it, then thrusts herself all the way up into the crawlspace.

Her feet dangle, kicking, then disappear into the hatch.

INT. CRAWLSPACE - DAY

Dark. Candace rolls over onto her stomach, tugging the flashlight from her waistband.

She flicks it on. A circle of light flashes against the exposed brick wall, the knife held out in the beam.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The HEADPHONES lie askew on the floor, the Doctor's tinny voice issuing from them.

DOCTOR
(on HEADPHONES)
...complaining of morning sickness,
and has since begun, strangely, to
lactate.

INT. CRAWLSPACE - CONTINUOUS

Candace swings the light to the right, toward the chimney. To the left, where fiberglass has been torn up in big tufts.

A SLIMY SOUND startles her. Candace rolls onto her back, shining the light at her bare toes.

The CREATURE emerges into the light, an ugly wrinkled thing with bleeding cataract eyes, it scurries toward her on four underdeveloped limbs. A withered tail slithers behind it, the umbilical cord, trailing a sticky phlegm-like substance.

It CHOMPS its tiny TEETH, grabbing hunks of her flesh as it crawls up her leg and under her shorts.

DOCTOR (V.O.)

It is my medical opinion that the patient suffers from what is called a phantom or hysterical pregnancy.

The creature wriggles up under her t-shirt.

Candace SCREAMS.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

The door UNLOCKS, then opens.

Joel steps in, book bag in hand. He's about to lay it on the breakfast table when he sees--

The floor, smeared and streaked with BLOOD.

His jaw drops. So does the book bag.

He rushes for the hall, slips in the blood, keeps going.

JOEL

Candace??

INT. HALL - CONTINUOUS

Joel rushes down the hall, passing the stairwell.

JOEL

CANDY!

CANDACE

I'm up here!

Her voice sounds odd. Joel peers up the stairs.

He bounds up them, two at a time. BLOODY HANDPRINTS on the banister.

The BATHROOM DOOR wide open. He sees a single foot first, drenched in blood. Then the leg, where blood has poured from.

She stands NAKED in front of the mirror, blood smeared and splashed on her SIGNIFICANTLY ROUNDED BELLY and on her breasts. Deathly pale from blood loss.

Joel grips the hand rail, on the verge of passing out or throwing up or both. He sees the rest in snippets:

One foot on the toilet, drenched in blood.

Candace's hand raised, a THREADED NEEDLE glistening with blood between her fingers, the thread pulled taught.

FLASHBACK: Candace SCREAMS as the thing wriggles up under her t-shirt. She grabs at it. The sound of SUCKLING.

DOCTOR (V.O.)
Breastfeeding releases oxytocin.

Candace's look of dead-eyed fear softens. The SUCKLING resumes. The creature COOS softly, suckles again.

Candace's lips turn up in a weak smile.

DOCTOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Oxytocin creates a feeling of euphoria, strengthening the mother-child bond.

She opens a drawer. Grabs a pair of SCISSORS.

BACK TO SCENE

The scissors on the tub by her foot drip thick blood on the carpet. DRIP-DRIP-DRIP.

Joel stumbles forward, sickly.

JOEL
...Candace?

Candace smiles maniacally at herself in the mirror, blood spattered on her face and drying in her hair.

DOCTOR (V.O.)
Oxytocin is nature's painkiller.

FLASHBACK: The SCISSORS CUT FLESH.

DOCTOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Oxytocin is addictive.

Joel follows the taught black thread in her fingers down from the needle, past her SIGNIFICANTLY ROUNDED BELLY, down a ragged, six-inch GASH from the labia she's HAPHAZARDLY SEWN TOGETHER, from which fresh blood drips.

He stumbles into the bathroom, holding the door jamb to keep himself upright.

Candace turns to him, smiling. She peels his hand from the door and places it on her belly. Something inside her WRITHES, the FLESH MOVING UNDER HIS HAND.

Joel's eyes widen in horror, full of tears. He doesn't know what to think. His mouth opens to speak... but nothing comes out.

Candace smothers his hand against her stomach. She looks up at him with sheer joy, then turns her smile to their reflection.

He follows her gaze, the three of them FRAMED PERFECTLY in the mirror.

Mother smiling. Father looking deathly pale. Unborn abomination wriggling in her belly beneath their hands.

CANDACE

We're pregnant.

FADE OUT.